

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

PHOTOSHOP SKILLS

15 STEPS TO BETTER
BOSS DESIGN

FREE!

6 NEW VIDEO
WORKSHOPS

PLUS PHOTOSHOP
CUSTOM BRUSHES

WORKSHOPS

CONCEPT A STRIKING
GAME ENVIRONMENT
MASTER A MODULAR
ART WORKFLOW
SPEEDPAINT A MECH
FOR VIDEO GAMES

NEW
FFXIV ART
INSIDE

THE ART OF FINAL FANTASY XIV

Exclusive access! Become a better video games
artist with the team behind FFXIV: Endwalker



ART INSIGHTS FROM
YUSUKE MOGI ROKUMA SAITO
AYUMI NMAE TETSU TSUKAMOTO

"Pro art secrets inside!
Learn how this cover
was made" - page 34

Welcome to... NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX



Final Fantasy XIV is one of the world's biggest and longest-running games. This issue we meet some of the elusive stars of the game's art team. They shun the limelight and let the game's intricate creatures, characters and worlds do the talking, but inside this issue

you can hear from Yusuke Mogi, Rokuma Saito, Ayumi Nanae and Tetsu Tsukamoto. They reveal insights into life at Square Enix, what it takes to make it in the video games industry, and how they approach creating the beautiful art for this hit game. Look out for their work on Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker, releasing as you read this.

Tutorials this issue pick up on the video game theme. Brandt Andrisc shares his process for creating a procedural environment using Blender and Photoshop, Ubisoft's Kobe Sek reveals how to speedpaint a mech design, and Thomas Scholes demonstrates how to turn your art into a modular workflow for speedy concepts.

Don't want to miss an issue? Then subscribe using our new Christmas offer on page 8, and get a free laptop bag worth £90.

Ian

Editor
ian.dean@futurenet.com

EDITOR'S CHOICE Three of my top picks this month...



The art of Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker

They rarely sit down for interviews, but this issue we meet the artists behind the hit MMORPG.



Improve your boss designs

Create a video game boss character with Tristan Tait's tutorial, including designing attack phases.



Paint a fantasy portrait - Part 2: Sketching

Part two of Patrick J Jones' oils series sees the artist begin to sketch the scene from reference.

@imaginefxmagazine
@imaginefx
facebook.com/imaginefx
imaginefx.creativebloq.com
ifxm.ag/ifxnewsletter-v2

sign up for our newsletter!



Subscribe today!

Sign up to ImagineFX and you'll receive a free STM Myth laptop bag worth £90! See page 8 for details



SUBSCRIBE & SAVE!

ImagineFX Contents

Your art

10 **FXPosé**

News and events

18 **Tetsu Tsukamoto on the secret of concept art success**

The Final Fantasy concept artist believes team work and attention to detail are key.

22 **Beyond a Steel Sky**

Dave Gibbons returns to video games.

23 **A Day in the Life of... Naomi Baker**

This artist cuts down on online distractions.

24 **Serif Affinity**

How Serif Affinity Designer was used to illustrate Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

26 **Artist in Residence**

Chuck Grieb on his multi-zone workspace.

Features

30 **Interview: Yusuke Mogi**

We discuss influences, workflow and design approaches with Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker's art team lead.

38 **Sketchbook: Sabin Boykinov**

Fantastical environments abound!

42 **The Art of Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker**

Discover how the art team creates the game's innovative worlds and characters.

Regulars

3 **Editor's letter**

6 **Resources**

7 **Next month**

8 **Print subscriptions**

29 **Letters**

54 **Recent editions**

80 **Digital subscriptions**

81 **Reviews**



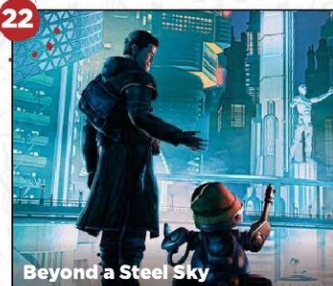
Tetsu Tsukamoto



Yusuke Mogi



The Art of Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker



Beyond a Steel Sky



Artist in Residence:
Chuck Grieb



38



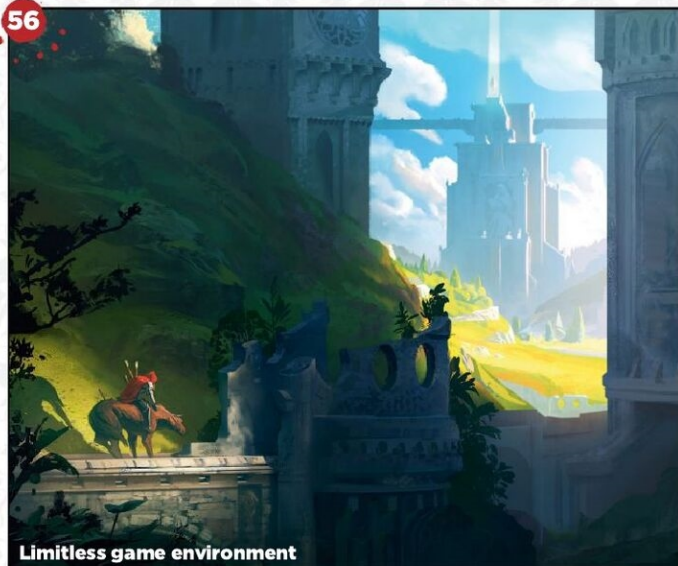
Sketchbook: Sabin Boykinov

64



Design a boss for a game

56



Limitless game environment

70



Modular art workflow

76



Speedpaint a mech

Workshops

56 How to design a limitless game environment

Brandt Andrist's landscape painting workflow has countless possibilities...

62 Painting in watercolours

Isis Sousa covers Corel Painter 2022's three sets of watercolour tools.

64 Improve your boss designs

Tristan Tait shows how to create a powerful adversary for a 2D indie game.

70 Modular art workflow

Get more from what you already have, says Thomas Scholes!

76 Speedpaint a mech design

Kobe Sek makes use of negative space.

92



Sketching for a portrait piece

Traditional Artist

88 Traditional FXPosé

Discover this month's selection of the finest traditional art, sent in by you!

92 Workshop: Paint a portrait - Part 2: Sketching

See how Patrick J Jones directs a photoshoot and draws a sketch in preparation for his oil painting.

98 First Impressions:

Erik Krenz

Discover how nature continues to inspire this US-based illustrator.



ImagineFX Resources

ImagineFX
FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

Editorial
Editor **Ian Dean**
ian.dean@futurenet.com
Art Editor **Daniel Vincent**
Operations Editor **Cliff Hope**

Contributors
Brandt Andrist, Sabir Boykin, Dom Carter, Tanya Combrink,
Chuck Grieb, Patrick J. Jones, Thomas Scholes, Kobe Sek,
Gary Stuckey, Isis Sousa, Glen Southern, Tristan Tait

Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Chief Revenue Officer **Zack Sullivan**
UK Commercial Sales Director **Clare Dove**
Advertising Sales Manager **Mike Pyatt**
michael.pyatt@futurenet.com, 01225 687538
Account Sales Director **George Lucas**
george.lucas@futurenet.com, 01225 687531

International Licensing
ImagineFX is available for licensing and syndication. To find
out more contact us at licensing@futurenet.com or view our
available content at www.futurecontenthub.com.
Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**

Subscriptions - turn to page 8!
Online orders www.magazinesdirect.com
Customer service
Email help@magazinesdirect.com
Telephone +44 (0) 330 333 1113
Group Marketing Director
Magazines & Memberships **Sharon Todd**

Circulation
Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production
Head of Production **Mark Constance**
Production Project Manager **Clare Scott**
Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**
Production Manager **Vivienne Calvert**

Management
Group Art Director **Warren Brown**
Content Director **Chris George**
Managing Director **Paul Newman**
Chief Content Officer **Angie O'Farrell**
Commercial Finance Director **Dan Jotcham**

Printed by Wyndeham Peterborough, Storey's Bar Road,
Peterborough PE1 5YS

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf,
London, E14 5HU www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9001
ISSN 1748-850X

All contents © 2021 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All
rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or
reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher.
Future Publishing Limited (company number 0258855) is registered in
England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1
1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and
is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot
accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You
are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to
the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Ads and
websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are
not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them.
This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the
companies it advertises for.

If you submit material to us, you warrant that you own the material and/
or have the necessary rights/permissions to supply the material and you
automatically grant Future and its licensors a licence to publish your
submission in whole or in part in any/all issues and/or editions of publications,
in any format published worldwide and on associated websites, social media
channels and associated products. Any material you submit is sent at your
own risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees,
agents, subcontractors or licensors shall be liable for loss or damage. We
assume all unsolicited material is for publication unless otherwise stated, and
reserve the right to edit, amend or adapt all submissions.

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from
responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture.
The paper in this magazine was sourced and produced from sustainable
managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic
standards. The manufacturing paper mill holds full FSC (Forest Stewardship
Council) certification and accreditation.



For press freedom
with responsibility



Getting hold of this issue's resources is easy.
Just visit ifxm.ag/ff208endwalker

WORKSHOP VIDEOS



Create infinite environments
Brandt Andrist uses 2D and 3D tools to build
up a landscape for a video game. See page 56.



Boost your watercolour skills
See how Isis Sousa uses watercolours in Corel
Painter 2022. Her workshop's on page 62.



Paint a boss, like a boss!
Watch Tristan Tait design a tough opponent
for a game. Turn to page 64 for more insights.



Try a new creative workflow
Thomas Scholes reveals how he reuses old art
to generate new concept visuals. See page 70.



Quickly paint a mech
See how Kobe Sek works with colours and
negative space. His workshop's on page 76.



Draw a sketch for a portrait
Watch Patrick J Jones sketch from the results
of his life-model photoshoot. Turn to page 92.

PLUS CUSTOM BRUSHES...

TT_MAIN

Tristan Tait's custom bristled brush
features Flow and Opacity settings.

SOFT ROUND01

This brush is ideal for soft blending
or adding effects, reveals Tristan.

HARD ROUND INKER

Tristan uses this brush for blocking
in flat colours and inking lines.



ImagineFX

**Connectors.
Creators.
Experience
Makers.**

Future plc is a public
company quoted on the
London Stock Exchange
(symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

Chief executive **Zillah Byng-Thorne**
Non-executive chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief financial officer **Penny Ladkin-Brand**
Tel: +44 (0)1225 442 344

Next month

Next month in...
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Animation art

Learn new insights from the artists behind
Maya and the Three, Arcane and more!

Also in the issue...

Pro character design advice

DreamWorks and Netflix animator Jacqueline Droujko shares her tips.

Life-drawing masterclass

Fine artist Charlie Pickard begins his essential figure-drawing series.

Paint perfect backgrounds

Dia Jamandron reveals how to plan and paint animation scenes.

How to animate using Quill

Director Dan Franke shares his tips for starting in VR filmmaking.



ISSUE 209 ON SALE 23 DECEMBER IN PRINT & DIGITAL

The Perfect Christmas Gift for just **£59.99**

plus

FREE STM MYTH LAPTOP BAG



**NOT FROM
THE UK?**

Visit our website (opposite)
and save up to 45 per
cent off an annual
print subscription!

Combines space,
cutting-edge
impact protection
and sleek tailoring.

The CableReady
system lets you
charge devices with
cords out of sight.

The padded strap
and clever back panel
design provide
all-round comfort.

Terms and conditions: Offer closes 31 January 2022. Offer open to new UK subscribers only. All gift subscriptions will start post-Christmas with the next available issue. Please allow up to six weeks for delivery. Your gift will be delivered separately within 60 days after your first payment has cleared. Gifts only available to subscribers on the UK mainland. In the unlikely event that we run out of this gift, we promise to offer you an alternative gift of the same

Your special Christmas offer

- FREE free STM Myth Laptop Bag worth £90.00
- Enjoy 12 months of ImagineFX for just £59.99 – that's just £4.61 an issue!
- Receive every issue delivered direct to your door
- Subscribers enjoy text-free covers
- A thoughtful gift that keeps delivering throughout the year



Upgrade to include digital for only £10

- Instant access any time, anywhere
- Never miss an issue of ImagineFX
- Available on iOS or Android

Order the gift that keeps on delivering

WWW.MAGAZINESDIRECT.COM/IFX/XM21

or call 0330 333 1113 and quote XM21

FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Alex Vede Cabalar

LOCATION: Spain MEDIA: Sketchbook Pro, Procreate WEB: alexvede.bigcartel.com

Alex says: "What inspires me the most is cinema. I always try to make my art as cinematic as possible, seeking movement and dramatic compositions."

1



1 THE ASTRONAUT

"This is one of my characters. He has a whole story behind him that I hope I can tell someday in a full-length comic book."

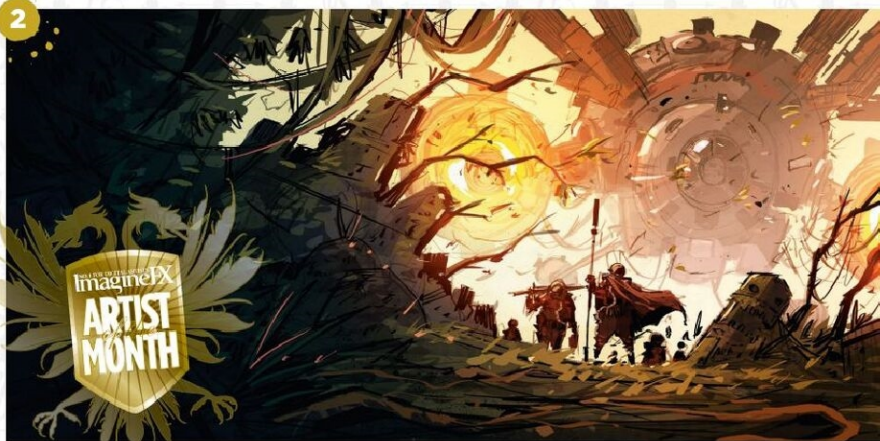
2 ASTRONAUT EXPLORERS

"Leaving part of the frame in darkness makes the details and the light more vibrant."

3 SOMETHING ON THE BEACH

"This one was painted over a very small pencil thumbnail. I usually make the best compositions from very fast and small sketches."

2



3



4 BATTLE IN MOUNT FUJI

"Part of a series of illustrations inspired by old Japanese woodprints. I used traditional inks then built up the colour digitally."





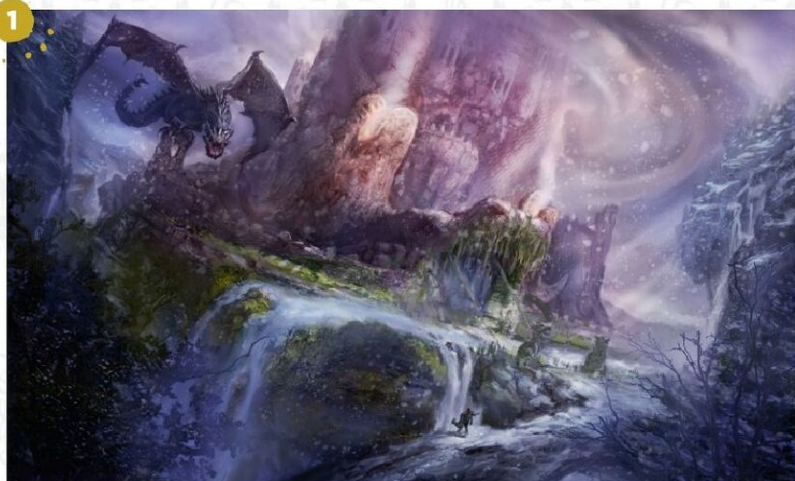
Julian Vidales

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Sketchbook, ZBrush Core Mini **WEB:** julianvidalescreates.com

Julian is a full-time high school art teacher, and a freelance illustrator and concept artist. He's contributed designs to Elder Scrolls Online, MX vs ATV Reflex, Mafia Wars Shakedown and Mafia Wars 2.

1 CASTLE OF DRAGONS

"This image started as an example for my digital art class to focus on fore-, mid- and background, and mood. Here our hero has discovered the Boss's castle."



2 CAVEMAN ATTACK

"This image depicts a caveman on the attack against a fiery dragon. I wanted to make use of an old caveman silhouette from college."

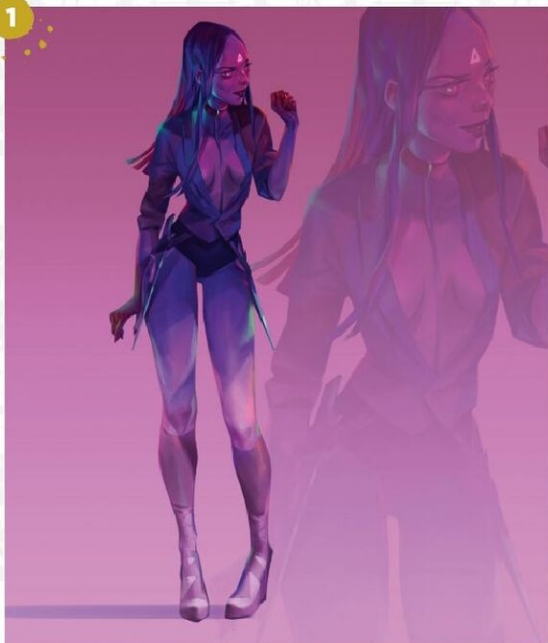




Alexandra Fastovets

LOCATION: Ukraine MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: instagram.com/hanukafast

Alexandra is a freelance comic book artist who has always been inspired by oil paintings and cartoons. "The variety of shapes, types of faces and colour combinations are my greatest thrill in art."



1 ASIAN

"It was only when I started working with colour for myself that I realised I'm an absolute fan of pink."

2 GYMNASTS

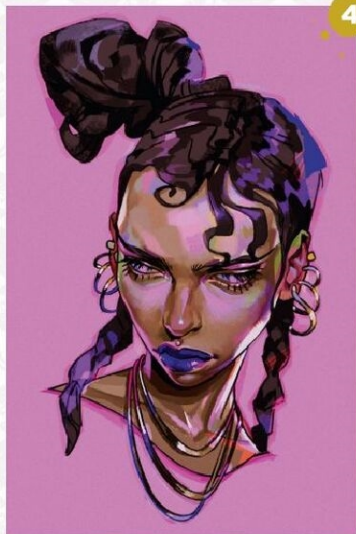
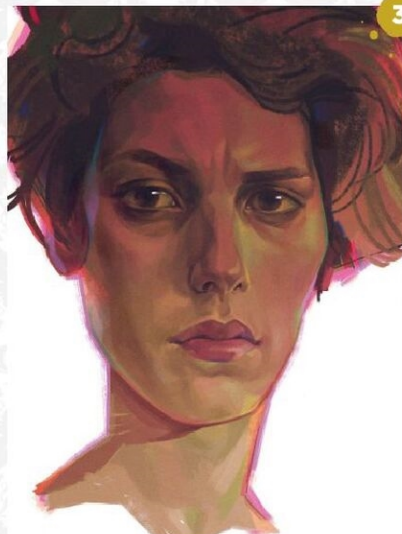
"Sports are a good way to study the plasticity of the human body. Gymnasts are especially flexible and make interesting poses."

3 IRA

"I had wanted to paint a rendered portrait for a long time, and I'm happy how this came out."

4 MCQUEEN

"I really love the style of Alexander McQueen's design house, so I took some elements from it when creating this portrait."





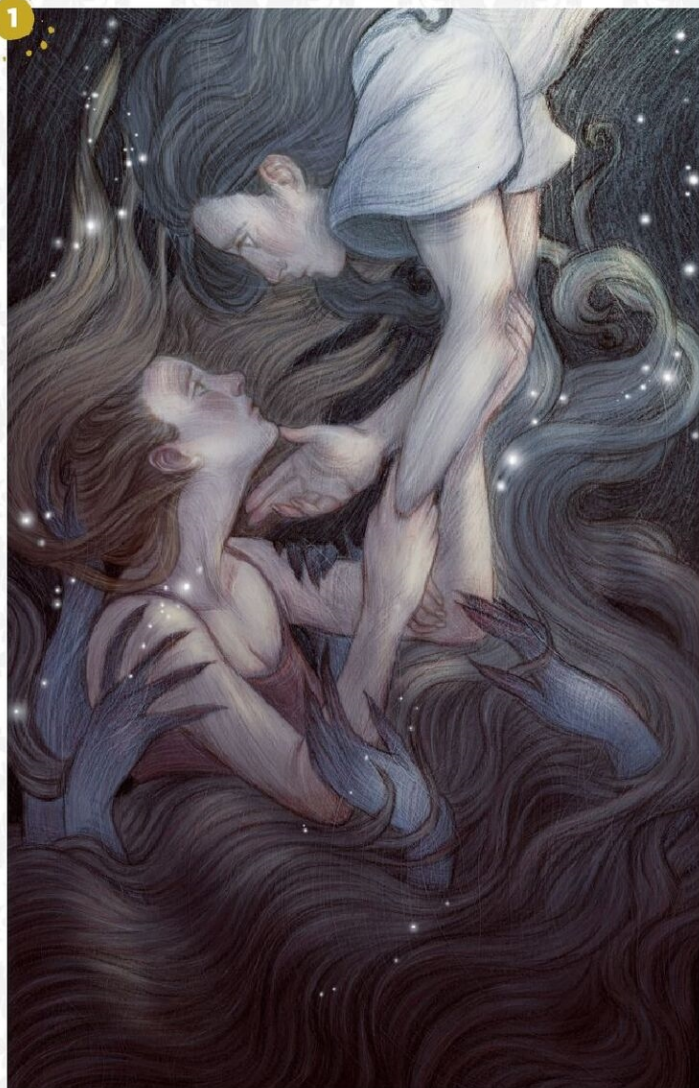
Kring Demetrio

LOCATION: Philippines **MEDIA:** Pencils, charcoal, graphite, Photoshop **WEB:** thedrawerkring.com

Kring is a self-taught illustrator who's inspired by folklore and popular myths. Her drawings feature etchings made from empty ballpoint pens and wooden skewers, usually depicting lines and other decorative images.

1 MIMESIS

"A cover art commission of a young woman being dragged to the depths by the rusalka while her lover tries to save her."



2 LOVE SONG FOR A VAMPIRE

"A tribute illustration; the etched lace and long gown give homage to Eiko Ishioka's iconic Lucy Westenra bridal gown."



3 SEVEN DEVILS

"Melancholia and mania (two-headed snake), paranoia (spider), anxiety (scorpion), stagnation (cockroach), self-sabotage (ants), and my impostor syndrome (blind crow) are my devils."

4 KAKAHUYAN (FOREST)

"The myth of the tamaloslos is about an evil pan-like creature that preys on people passing through thick forests."





Caner Soylu

LOCATION: Poland **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Painter **WEB:** behance.net/cango

Turkish-born Caner is a professionally trained children's book illustrator whose digital paintings are celebrated for their use of light and colour. Having emigrated to Poland in 2017, he has illustrated over 30 books.

1 A GIRL'S ROOM

"This is a book illustration where I tried to create a whimsical impression with two contrasting colours of light emanating from different sources."

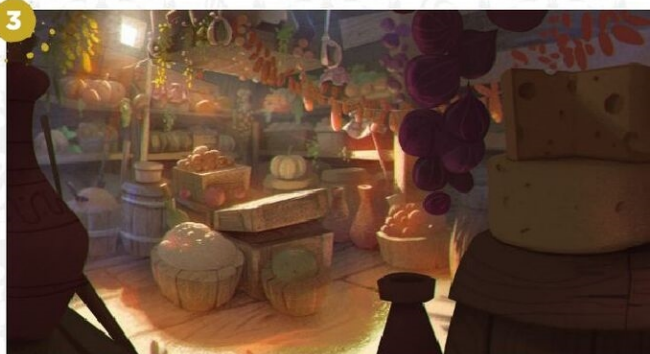


2 THE INVENTOR

"A mysterious discovery has occurred in a young inventor's room. I wanted to leave the object that has been discovered up to the viewer's imagination."



3



4



3 THE CELLAR

"I imagined where food was stored in the Middle Ages. I wanted to study a burst of light and its effect on different textures."

4 ASIAN KID

"A child from the steppes is playing on a goat. This was inspired by my ancestor's homeland and their lifestyle as Turkish people."



Insist

LOCATION: China MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: zhiruiwang.artstation.com

Insist is a chief conceptual designer who enjoys the performance process of 2D rendering. Inspired by life experiences as well as film and TV shows, Insist is also influenced by horror and Hong Kong films from his childhood.



1 DINNER

"A couple settle down for their daily dinner while eyeless portraits look on. Let's hope the food was worth the wait."

2 MIRROR

"The child wonders what the adult sees in the mirror. It looks like it's reflecting something that isn't there..."

3 FAMILY PORTRAIT

"This looks like a natural family. But what are those mysterious cloaked figures in the background?"



Do you want to see your art on these pages? Then email five pieces of your work and a short explanation about each artwork, along with a photo and a few details about yourself, to fxpose@imaginefx.com

Tetsu Tsukamoto reveals the secret to concept art success

Anima class The Final Fantasy character concept artist believes team work and attention to detail matter most

Few people would disagree if we said that character concept artist **Tetsu Tsukamoto** was born to create weird and complex monsters for video games. His father is a graphic designer, his uncle a potter, his aunt a furniture artist, and his cousin a manga artist, illustrator and crafter... creativity runs in the family.

The experienced character concept artist rarely does interviews, especially outside of Japan, so we're honoured he's chosen ImagineFX to reflect on his art, process and career in the video games industry.

Tsukamoto-san was inspired by the 1984 fantasy film *The NeverEnding Story* to begin his art journey, and has spent over 24 years inspiring us with his whimsical designs for the iconic Final Fantasy VII onwards. His creatures – some of the most inspired and creative in video games – have dominated our imaginations and influenced many.

FINDING A FANTASY

Tsukamoto-san tells us that remaining constant as well as inventive requires an understanding of the rules and characteristics of each new Final Fantasy release in the long-running franchise. Each has a unique feel, "where the atmosphere and vibe changes with every instalment," says the artist, while needing to remain visually a part of the Final Fantasy brand. In this regard Final Fantasy, and its newest release, Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker, is a distinct conundrum. ➤

"It looks like the battle planning team had a hard time getting the whole body into the screen because it's so long, but I was extremely satisfied with the huge tail and ability to ride on the back, which added a lot of fun into the mix."





THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

The 90s point-n-click game *Beneath A Steel Sky* gains a sequel, and comic illustrator Dave Gibbons returns to lend the art a distinctive hand-drawn touch. **Page 22**



NO TIME WASTERS

Marvel Studios concept artist Naomi Baker tells us that she uses a website blocker to avoid online distractions during her working day. **Page 23**



BARGAIN PURCHASE

Veteran illustrator and animator Chuck Grieb shows us around his studio, which is centred on an antique table with adjustable top that cost Chuck just \$20. **Page 26**



THE ART OF FINAL FANTASY XIV SPECIAL

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

TETSU TSUKAMOTO

The character concept artist on how to get ahead

Do you have advice for artists wanting to work in video games?

You should be able to use 3D tools and understand how character implementation works in games. Making sure you have that covered will enable you to avoid producing designs that demands high-development resources. It's important in any industry, but having a wide range of design methods and models is essential, as well as the ability to flexibly change and adapt the worldview that one holds in response to requests.

How has the industry changed since you started?

The graphics expressed through home game consoles have improved dramatically, and realism is no longer a selling point. There's also been a huge influx of mobile games and (I feel) overseas titles are more fun than before. Lastly, I think it's getting harder and harder to accept new things in Japan.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I would say to avoid taking on more work than I can handle. When I was younger, I tried too many times to take on every piece of work that came my way.

Is a career as an artist all you thought it would be?

If video games hadn't evolved so much and there weren't so many jobs in the industry, I think I would have become a designer of fantasy-themed furniture. I consider myself lucky to have become a monster designer.

➤ “I learned from Tetsuya Nomura [Final Fantasy VII’s legendary designer and director] to always think of something new, something that others don’t think of. But it’s equally important to make sure we don’t miss out the basic conventions and themes too,” says Tsukamoto-san.

The artist has a structured way of working. After reading over the concept of the project, he’ll collect images, descriptive text and three-dimensional art to create a document

“It makes me incredibly happy to see that Anima is being used again, with the appearance this time in Final Fantasy XIV.”

“The ideal design would be one that I’ll want to display in my room...”

comprising a few pages that can be used to formulate ideas “and wait for inspiration to strike”.

After watching anime and reading manga to drive his inspiration Tsukamoto-san says, “I’ll then take a deep breath and look up while imagining the monster is actually there, in a large space before me.

“As such, I’ll usually take my notebook and materials to a large park to come up with ideas.”

The concept comes easily. Yet colouring, says Tsukamoto-san, can be fraught – but nothing anime can’t subdue. “I’m not sure if I have a complex about colouring, but when I’m painting this process is usually extremely unpleasant for me,” he says. “As a result, doing that just at the level where I’m not concentrating seems to actually be just the right thing for me.”

Tsukamoto-san considers how other teams in the studio will use his art, such as this concept for Hades.



It’s refreshing to discover an artist as experienced as Tsukamoto-san has his pet hates.

TEAM WORK MATTERS

Tsukamoto-san explains how thinking bigger and considering the game’s team is important for good design. While he may begin with designing a “single point of appeal” to ensure his design is unique, he always considers how this creature will be made and used. Tsukamoto-san explains how he imagines the creature will be animated and how the VFX will be implemented. He’ll then create three-dimensional drawings and reference art that are easily understood by other staff working on the game.

The artist believes creating good designs is about teamwork: “I’ll think about finding a point of compromise

when preparing the design to avoid difficulties in the preparation of the models and motion while also ensuring they look good without increasing the cost,” says the artist.

There are some interesting constraints on Tsukamoto-san’s design process that stem from his experience and understanding of the video game production process.

He shares how hair textures are difficult to express. UV scrolling and other animation expressions can’t be used, while transparent expressions are difficult to use because of the heavy processing not associated with an online MMORPG.

Just as importantly he considers the moral nature of his art, and if it’ll trigger trypophobia and other conditions in players. “What I mean by that is, even if it’s a monster that I’m

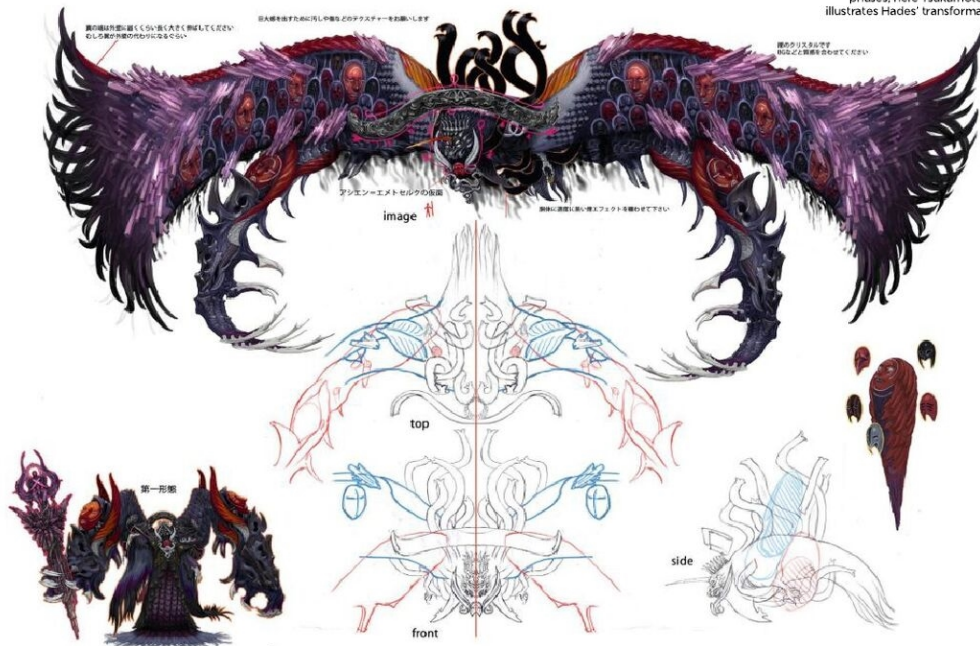
5.0: ラスボス「ハーデス(アシエン)」第一形態



5.0ラスボス_ハーデス(アシェン=エメトセルク) 第二形態

2018/10/23 塚本

Boss characters in Final Fantasy XIV are complex and often feature multiple phases, here Tsukamoto-san illustrates Hades' transformation.



designing, the ideal design would be one that I'll want to display in my room if it's made into an action figure!"

LIVING THE FANTASY

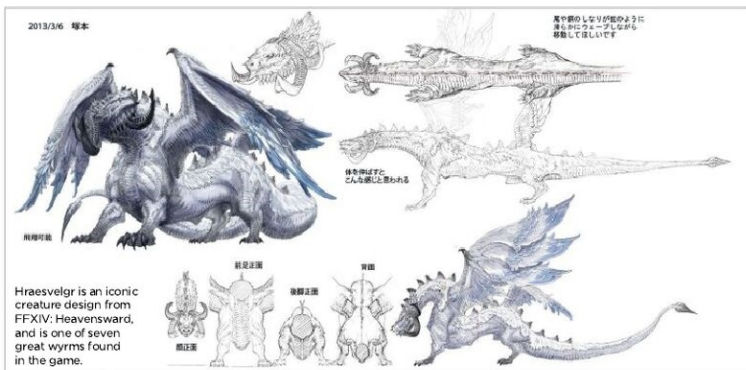
Tsukamoto-san comes across as a humble person, who takes pride in his work, considers the player's experience and uses of his art, but also the Final Fantasy XIV team as a whole. Having worked on the offline series since 1997, he tells us moving onto the online version, Final Fantasy XIV, was an eye-opening experience.

"I didn't have any contact or involvement with other players when I previously worked on offline games, and consequently I didn't know how my drawings were perceived by the players," he tells us. "Final Fantasy XIV marked my debut into the realm of online games, and I feel both proud and also a little embarrassed when I hear players talk about past Final Fantasy games with such enthusiasm."

Tsukamoto-san's approach to his work is summed up when he says, "I feel lucky to have been involved with Final Fantasy for a long time."



Tsukamoto-san was eight-years-old when he decided to become an artist, and went on to win art competitions while at school.



Hraesvelgr is an iconic creature design from FFXIV: Heavensward, and is one of seven great wyrms found in the game.

All images © 2010-2021 SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. All Rights Reserved.



"There are great similarities, such as the ability to tell stories very economically and succinctly," says Dave Gibbons about moving from comics to video games.

Dave Gibbons goes back to the future

Game's afoot The acclaimed *Watchmen* artist returns to video game development with *Beyond a Steel Sky*



Legendary *Watchmen* artist Dave Gibbons has been here before. Back in the 1990s he was offered "an obscene amount of money" to help develop an adventure game Beneath a Steel Sky with point-and-click auteur Charles Cecil. Dave would fax art to the developer, but now it's at the press of a button from his Wacom Cintiq.

The process has changed, but just as Dave found the constraints of the 16-bit era – limited colours, data sizes, and fax machines – a creative challenge, even now on PlayStation 5, he loves the trials technology offers.

He tells us: "One of the things I've always enjoyed creatively is having

restrictions, because when you have restrictions, that does kind of force you to really think about what you're doing and work very efficiently, and actually rise to the challenge of doing something that's a little restrictive."

This is where comic art and video game art merges, says the artist. New game *Beyond a Steel Sky*, "a spiritual successor," says Dave, has the tech to make the game more realistic – but that comes with its own challenges.

THE HUMAN TOUCH

"What we didn't want to lose was the hand-drawn, handcrafted feeling that the first game had, with textured painted backgrounds," comments Dave. The first game was created by

scanning and pixelating his art into the game. For the follow-up, Dave's drawings, schematics and "little scribbles" are turned into three-dimensional worlds, but with the aim of creating something that "looked like it could have been drawn".

Dave continues: "I think with *Beyond a Steel Sky* you get the feeling that you're stepping into the comic and kind of reading the comic, and then the comic starts to move and then you start to move within the comic book imagery."

To accompany the game's release Dave has created a comic. He did the same for the original 1994 game, but that was a practical decision to show its hero as best they could. Now, says Dave, it's vice versa: "All the objects are so wonderfully rendered and drawn that it was the question of bringing the comic book up to match the visuals of the game."

Video game or new comic, we're confident fans of Dave Gibbons' work won't be disappointed.

You can see more of *Beyond a Steel Sky* at revolution.co.uk and microdms.com/game-beyond-a-steel-sky.

Dave Gibbons has created a new comic to accompany *Beyond a Steel Sky*'s release. The artist says he loves the efficiency and restrictions of comics.



"One of the things I've always enjoyed creatively is having restrictions," says Dave.



Art by Revolution Software

Personal character art by Naomi Baker from earlier this year, entitled The Pact.



Naomi created this art for one of the loading screens from the video game Ghost of Tsushima.

© Sony Interactive Entertainment LLC



Naomi's concept art for Ryuzo, one of the supporting characters from the Ghost of Tsushima.

© Sony Interactive Entertainment LLC

A day in the life of... Naomi Baker

Staying focused This concept artist advocates keeping online distractions to a minimum during work hours

I wake up at 7am, make some coffee, and then shower, assemble an outfit, do my hair and makeup while watching YouTube cooking videos and checking emails. It's important to me to get ready because that's how I'm able to get myself in the office mindset.

Around 9:30am, I sit down at my computer and check social media. Then at 10am my website blocker turns on and I put my phone out of reach. I find that using a strict blocker for distracting sites such as social media really improves my productivity.

I usually start my day knowing what I'm going to be working on and I generally power through until 3pm

when I'll send my piece in. Some days, I take a quick lunch break at noon and will usually eat a sandwich outside for some vitamin D.

Feedback from the client will generally come back within either a couple of minutes or a couple of hours. While waiting for notes, I'll work on some loose ends, clean the house or do some laundry. Depending on when the feedback comes in, I'll either do the revisions before dinner, or come back for a couple of hours after dinner to finish. After work, my partner and I will watch an episode of something or play a video game together. Then around 10pm, I start my night-time routine and then read for a bit before bed.



Concept Art Association is an organisation committed to elevating and raising the profile of concept artists, their art and their involvement in the entertainment industries. Its annual Concept Art Awards Show showcases and recognises behind-the-scenes individuals working in entertainment concept art. conceptartassociation.com.

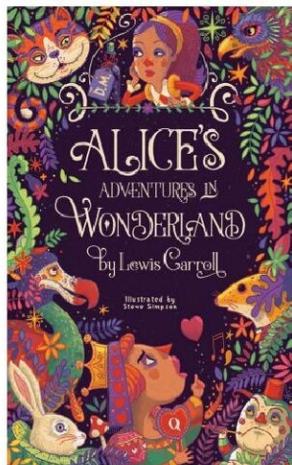
My biggest piece of advice is to be mindful of where you're putting your energy. Don't invest too much on the internet and social media. I've found that focusing on having fun with your art and not placing pressure on myself has been important for my mental health and success.



Naomi is a concept artist who's worked in film, video games, TV and animation, and is currently full time with Marvel Studios Visual Development Team. See more of her art at aristation.com/naomibaker.

Steve Simpson used Affinity Designer on the iPad to create the illustrations for this collector's edition of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

Once Steve had produced the art, the whole book was put together in Serif's Affinity Publisher, the company's desktop publishing software.



Illustrating a classic

Against type Steve Simpson on how he used hand-drawn text with his art for a new edition of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland



Illustrating a book with a strong cultural presence is a challenge for any artist. The work must walk a fine line between being original, but also recognisable.

English illustrator Steve Simpson is known for his whimsical characters, which he put to good use in creating his own unique take on Lewis Carroll's 1865 novel Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

"I'm a huge fan of the book," says Steve. "I was introduced to Alice's Adventures in Wonderland at an early age, growing up just a few miles down the road from Lewis Carroll's birthplace, and over the years I've collected several vintage illustrated copies."

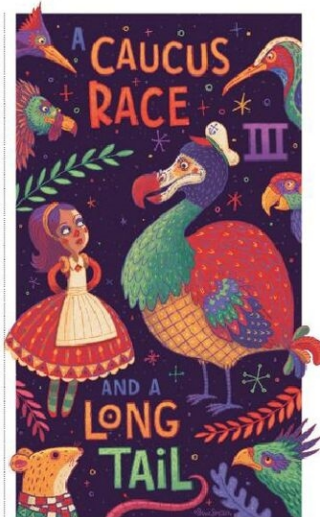
Steve is known for his lively packaging designs and his style is inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement, and 1950s advertising.



Sir John Tenniel's work in the original book broke new ground by integrating text and illustration, so it's perhaps fitting that Steve has built on this by combining his illustrations with hand lettering.

USING SERIF'S ART TOOLS

This special edition of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was produced by Serif to showcase the capabilities of its Affinity apps. The book itself was put together with Affinity Publisher and Steve used Affinity Designer for his illustrations. The process of creating the book is one of the projects detailed in the Affinity Publisher Workbook, which contains advice and tutorials from leading designers, publishers and other creatives that will teach you everything you need to build your own magazines, brochures and books. You can get a 30 per cent discount if you buy the Affinity



Placing lettering within the illustrations, Steve added another dimension to Lewis Carroll's story.

Publisher Workbook during the Black Friday/Cyber Monday fortnight, which starts 22 November.

Affinity approached Steve a few years ago to enlist his help with beta testing the iPad version of Designer and at this point he didn't have a tablet, so trying out this app was his first experience of using an Apple

“Switching between vectors and pixels and back again was a real eye opener”

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

STEVE'S SIGNATURE STYLE

The illustrator describes his experience on this unique project

What was the initial brief for this project?

The outline for the brief was very simple: to illustrate Alice in my own style using Affinity Designer. I was given a lot of freedom as to how best to approach it; however, the illustrations had to be created very much with the original text in mind. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is such a classic that I was initially a little apprehensive in my approach – how do you illustrate a classic and make the art look original?

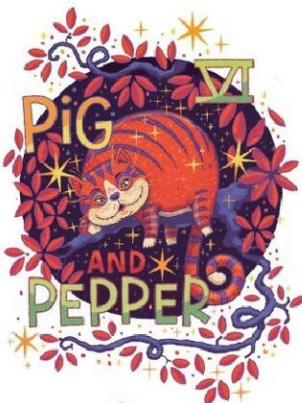
Which characters did you most enjoy drawing?

So many of the characters are full of personality, but probably the Cheshire Cat is my favourite. Coming from Cheshire, I've always felt proud my home county's name was put on the world stage by this guy.

Apart from bringing your own signature style to these illustrations, was there anything else you looked to do differently?

I'm always trying to experiment and develop my style, so this was a great opportunity to push pattern, colour and graphic shape a little further. The characters have been illustrated, animated and appeared in live action movies many times, meaning that there's a certain way the public expects to see them represented.

I was looking for a way to add something different and in my research I hadn't seen anyone incorporate hand lettering into their illustrations, so I decided to use a mix of graphic design and illustration. Incorporating the hand-drawn chapter titles and Roman numerals into the layout of the drawings is the part I enjoyed most.



Pencil. He had been using a mouse for 25 years up until this point.

"The first thing that really struck me was how I could work in both vectors and pixels. My style is very graphic in its design but painterly in its rendering, so being able to switch between vectors and pixels and back again was a real eye opener," says Steve. For his work on this project, he found that the ability to move vectors around and then paint within masked shapes sped up his process considerably.

PUSHING ART BOUNDARIES

Despite having over 30 years of experience as a professional illustrator and 50 awards under his belt, Steve is always looking to push boundaries with his aesthetic. "I've really enjoyed

The ability to manipulate vectors as well as paint with pixels was something that Steve loved about Serif's Affinity Designer.

working with Affinity Designer on the iPad," he says. "It has a lot of great features and effects that allow illustrators to work in many different styles, and it has allowed me to develop my style when I thought I'd hit a plateau on the app I was using."

Steve sees this aspect of the software as being one of the greatest benefits that Affinity Designer offers to illustrators. He explains: "It's an app that allows illustrators to create work that when you look at it, it's not obvious which app it's been done in – which is important when developing a unique style."

Affinity Designer, Affinity Publisher and Affinity Photo are available on Mac, PC and iPad for a one-off payment with no subscription. Visit affinity.serif.com.



We have three cats. When I'm working digitally, River, our Maine Coon mix, likes to sit with me at my computer. When painting, I keep the cats out of the studio to ensure they aren't harmed by the pigments.

The art on the walls and on the drawing board depicts the world I've created, which I call the Garden Clan. You can learn more about the Garden Clan Faeries and piggy Goblin Tribes at my Patreon ([thegardenclan.com](https://www.patreon.com/thegardenclan)).



Chuck Grieb

Imagining worlds What began as a \$20 drawing-table has evolved into a dedicated multi-zone workspace



For a long time, I created art in different locations throughout our home. Before commandeering the space I now inhabit, my traditional 'studio' was a converted closet off the family room. I shared a room with my wife (also an artist) where we created our digital work.

Seeing how I was bursting at the seams of the closet studio, my wife took pity on me, and suggested I consolidate all my artmaking in the

digital space we, at the time, shared. We swapped her desk and Cintiq into the closet I'd been using and moved my traditional art stuff into the formerly shared space.

The studio is divided into zones. The digital zone is centred around my 21-inch Wacom Cintiq. My tablet is now vintage, I suppose, as I'd acquired it in 2006, but it continues to soldier on.

These days I actually draw more often on my iPad Pro than the Cintiq and enjoy breaking free of my studio space to sketch and paint while sitting

in a comfy living-room chair. A large format printer and VR headset complete the digital picture.

TRADITIONAL ART ZONE

If I turn my chair 180 degrees from the Cintiq, I enter the traditional art zone, which is centred on an antique oak drawing table. The table's top can be rotated vertically when painting or lowered flat and used as a work bench for sculpting, cutting and so on. I also have a cutting ruler with a guard to protect my hand. I learned the hard way that such measures are important. I spent an evening in the emergency

“These days I actually draw more often on my iPad Pro than the Cintiq...”

Artist news, software & events

I installed 5,000K LED track lights for accurate colour rendition. They are fantastic at lighting the workspace and can be redirected if needed.

The palette box, outfitted with a glass palette, can be closed to preserve the paint and protect pets from stepping in the wet paint.

I love dinosaurs and other prehistoric beasts. The art on the walls are hand-tinted etchings removed from a 19th century German palaeontology text, along with examples of my original art.



A phone holder, useful for recording process videos. A sturdy clamp and an arm that can be tightened to hold its position. I've found this phone holder has proven itself a reliable and robust tool.

When shopping for a taborer, I found myself frustrated at the lack of affordable, quality options. Home Depot was having a sale on tool chests and it struck me that this was just what I needed. I bought two and love 'em!

room after I'd cut half my fingertip off when cutting illustration board.

I've installed shelving in the closet where I store various art supplies, as well as my all-in-one scanner/printer. The large format printer sits on top of an old pastel storage box. The second tool chest holds more supplies.

Making do for many years, whether with a small drawing table stuck in the corner of the dining or living room, to the closet space in the family room, has made me appreciate all-the-more this dedicated art making space. Now, if only it were a little bigger, the ceiling higher, and where am I going to put that easel I have on order?

Chuck is a story artist, teacher, animator, and illustrator who's worked for studios including Disney and Nickelodeon. Check out more of his art, comics and animation at chuckgrieb.com.



The converted closet where I used to paint. Note the closet doors - they could be shut, hiding the work area when not in use. This space now houses my wife's Cintiq workstation.



I built this ball/socket stop-motion animation armature when a student in college. Ray Harryhausen's creations had a dramatic impact on me as a young person, an impact that still resonates today.



Used as reference for an illustration of Grendel bursting into Hrothgar's hall. I sculpted him in Sculpey and painted him grey to help with lighting decisions.

Repainting the past

Retro revival How the Intellivision Amico is picking tips from the 80s

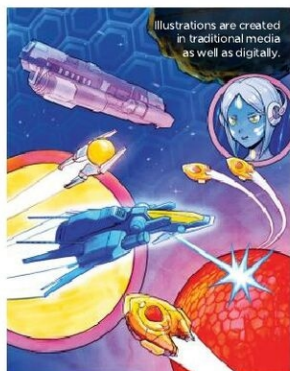
The upcoming Intellivision Amico games console treads the fine line between being a modern platform and a retro revival.

"We don't want to be perceived as a retro console," says art director



Mike Dietz. The hardware picks up design notes from the 1980s console, including a woodgrain version. But it's the vintage box art we love. "I really wanted to not make it entirely retro, but I wanted to kind of tip my hat to the old designs," comments Mike.

"As soon as we started talking about what we wanted these illustrations to look like, we knew we wanted them to have a little bit of a



Art director Mike Dietz wanted to combine a retro style with modern game art techniques.

nod towards that 1970s illustration style," he confirms. Mike explains that the cover illustrations are created from a mix of traditional media in brush pen, inks and watercolour, as well as digitally in Photoshop.

"It's a very fine line to hit," says Mike as he reflects on achieving the tone with the vintage-looking art. "You know, I think having lived through the 1970s I'm a little bit more sensitive to what's right and what's not."



Creating the art, like the console, was a balancing act between creating illustrations that recalled the era of plaid shirts, Space Invaders and wood-panelled everything without feeling like a simple reproduction.

Mike explains: "We want to do something new that hasn't been done before, but with an eye on our past." We get it, and you can too very soon. [Get a closer look at the Intellivision Amico console at intellivision.com.](http://intellivision.com)

Comic comedy

Flawed heroes Indie artist Kendra Wells explains why their comic, Real Hero Shit, packs a comedic punch



Real Hero Shit is the name of Kendra Wells' latest comic. "It's very much a title that fits the mood, I think, the story," they tell us about a book that follows four flawed adventurers. It's Dungeons & Dragons meets Seinfeld. "I mean, they're all a little dickish," reveals the artist.

These characters are a part of their creator: "They've been living in my brain and in my heart for so long at this point. I joke that they're my children. But it really does feel like each of them sort of come from a facet of my own brain," says Kendra.

The comic follows a party of four characters on a mission to save a village from an unknown evil. "I realised as I was writing these

characters, their conflicts and their flaws felt very real to me, and I realised almost belatedly how much I was relating to a lot of their struggles and a lot of their journeys," adds the artist, who's based in Brooklyn, U.S.

The comic's fantastic art and its pacing sells every joke with ease. "It's about the timing," says Kendra, comparing it to a theatre production.

"I'll find myself at my desk and I'll be like, 'why am I getting a headache,' and I'm realising that I'm doing the facial expressions as I'm drawing what the face is supposed to look like. I know a lot of cartoonists that actually keep a mirror at their desk so they can look at their own face. It's a very physical job."

[Follow the Real Hero Shit Kickstarter at bit.ly/real-hero-shit.](http://bit.ly/real-hero-shit)



The extravagant Prince Eugene is a latecomer to the party of hardy adventurers.

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Ian Dean, on mail@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, England



Follow us on Twitter:
twitter.com/imaginefx



Find us on Facebook:
facebook.com/imaginefx



Share your artwork via #imaginefx:
instagram.com/imaginefxmagazine

Dune wish list

Wow! I stepped out of the theatre last night and thought to myself: "I'd really like to see some production art for this!"

Callum Isaac Moscovitch
(@ravenswild), via Instagram

Frankly, it's great

After watching Dune there was no better way to relax than with a copy of ImagineFX and pages of concept art and advice. It was great to find I'm not alone in finding the old movie and books a source of inspiration. I only wish my work could reach the same level as the amazing Simon Goinard.

Abigail Brookes, via email

Cover star

I love every issue of ImagineFX, but I'm also always left wanting more! This issue's cover art tutorial [issue 207, The Art of Dune] was great and took me through the whole process, but I wish there was video to go with it. Sorry for moaning, it's just one small gripe with what was a great issue.

Mark Davies, via email



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?

Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 207 at ifxm.ag/single-ixf.

Reader Mark Davies wanted video to accompany Dave Keenan's cover workshop from issue 207.



Knowledge of 3D tools is a growing industry trend, but that doesn't mean you should give up painting in 2D.

Ian replies Hi Callum and Abigail, thanks for reading and saying such nice things! We love that our magazine can become a companion to such a great film, and expect some more issues like this coming soon. Mark, sadly cover artist Dave Keenan couldn't create video for this workshop, but the issue did come with video training for the other content that we hope was useful.

3D or not?

I've yet to make the leap into 3D, but it feels hard to avoid. Every artist ImagineFX talks to seems to urge us to move into 3D and away from 2D digital art. Is this really necessary, and if so, what would you recommend?

Oscar Daniels, via email

Ian replies Hi Oscar, while some artists say you must learn 3D it's always down to you and how you use it. Adding 3D into your workflow can't harm, but it also doesn't mean you should drop doing what you love. Some 3D tools can simply enhance your 2D art, for example. I'd recommend turning to page 82 to read our review of Procreate 5.2 that enables you to paint over 3D models in the 2D app. Also reviewed is ZBrushCoreMini, a free version of the main software that offers a taste of sculpting in its 3D clay. It's addictive.

Make it Moebius

While I loved Dune and your recent issue, I'm not sure the art direction was right for this adaptation. The book is a weird mix of sci-fi and fantasy, a new wave vision of the future, and it needed to be weirder. What I really mean is, it needed to be more Moebius.

Sarah Thomas, via Facebook

Ian replies Hi Sarah, while I get exactly where you're coming from, I think Dune's production design and art direction hit the mark. After speaking with the art team it was clear Dune was designed as a 'timeless' movie, and I think there is something transient about the approach. What do other readers think? Did you want more Moebius?

FRESH
PAINT

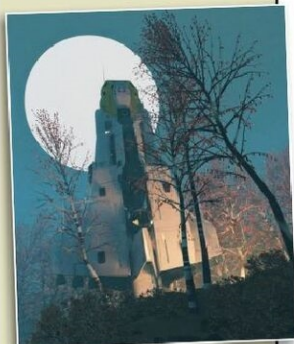
New works that have grabbed our attention



Royal Nine
@plutolori



Andy Suriano
@andy_suriano



Bryn Jones
@artwithbryn

If you've created art that you want us to shout about simply tag us on Twitter or Instagram, and use the hashtag #imaginefx



YUSUKE MOGI

THE ART OF
FINAL
FANTASY XIV
SPECIAL

“The impression of a line-drawing style has been around since Akihiko Yoshida’s time so I try to preserve that as much as possible”

Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker’s art team lead **Yusuke Mogi** reflects on his workflow, influences and approach to design. **Ian Dean** takes notes...

There’s a sense of responsibility that comes across when discussing the art of Final Fantasy XIV’s with art team lead

Yusuke Mogi. He speaks with a reference to the series as a whole, but also on creating concept art.

As a veteran Final Fantasy artist Mogi-san is aware of the traditions of the world’s leading RPG series. “The impression of a line-drawing style has been around since Akihiko Yoshida’s time, so I try to preserve that as much as possible,” says the artist, who explains he works almost wholly digitally using Photoshop and Clip Studio Paint, “but in my case, to give it a hand-drawn feel, I don’t use any

3D assets or photobash at all. In that sense, it’s almost like a ‘traditional’ way of doing things.”

THE FINAL FANTASY LOOK

For many, Mogi-san’s art is the epitome of the Final Fantasy style. One glimpse of an elegantly sketched figure swathed in colour washes and flowing robes and you know you’re in Square Enix’s long-running RPG series.

Despite the traditional watercolour feel of Mogi-san’s illustrations, he lets us into a secret of how he captures the facial expressions that fans love so much. “I draw the characters’ faces to convey the impression of actual 3D models, instead of the faces that I’d want to draw.”

GUNBREAKER THANCRED

Mogi-san’s concept art and character designs have defined the look of Final Fantasy XIV for many years.



DEATH UNTO DAWN

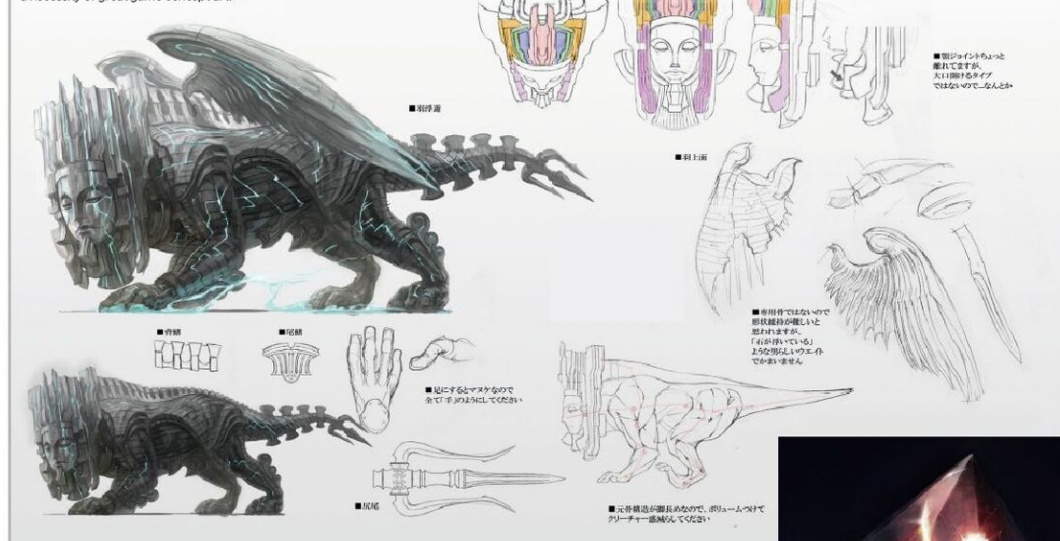
Yusuke Mogi's iconic art for the fifth update to FFXIV: Shadowbringers - Death Unto Dawn update showcases the leaders of the game's world of Eorzea.



Interview

MONSTER DESIGN

FFXIV has some of the most inspired and detailed monster design in the MMORPG genre. Mogi-san's work is both inventive and functional, a necessity of great game concept art.



➤ It's an eye-opening approach but one that shows the artist's connection to the game he's helping to make. Many of Mogi-san's designs are created as mood pieces or marketing art to promote the new game's feel – for example, his sublime Jobs roster – but he still considers how modellers will use them.

"Even if the idea is good, it'll be a waste if it can't be expressed effectively in the game," says Mogi-san, revealing his advice for any wannabe video game concept artists: "Concept artists and 3D modellers are inseparable. So, if you have a chance, do be sure to take on the challenge of 3D modelling. You can also learn more about concept art and it also expands your range of expression."

FINDING INSPIRATION

The age-old artist's dilemma of figuring out when an illustration is 'finished' can be taken out of a game concept artist's hands, shares Mogi-san. "The design is complete ('works') when it can be produced in-game with the modelling and animation, and without any bugs in the data," he says.

While the process of creating art can be framed by the production process, it doesn't hinder Mogi-san's need to be creative, and find new inspiration for his characters and artwork. "Of

Artist PROFILE

Yusuke Mogi

LOCATION: Japan

The lead character concept artist has been working in games for over 16 years.

MEDIA: Photoshop, Clip Studio Paint

WEB: eu.finalfantasyxiv.com

course, there are influences and numerous things that have served to inspire me," he tells us. "When I design something realistic and compelling, I'll start off with textual references, such as a novel.

"As for catchy designs, I look toward anime and manga as reference. For something that will leave an impression, I'll refer to movies. In such a way, I separate how I use reference materials."

The artist feels that taking in a broad spectrum of references can foster fresh ideas. New artistic discoveries are made when you can be open to ideas from other media. However, Mogi-san's biggest piece of advice for a video game concept artist, even if you're

“As for catchy designs, I look toward anime and manga as reference”

ECHOES OF A FALLEN STAR

These days Mogi-san uses Photoshop and Clip Studio Paint for a traditional watercolour feel to his art.



working in the industry, is to play other people's games.

He explains: "I believe it's crucial to play games from our competitors in order to foster new discoveries if one finds themselves in a situation (or state of mind) where they've reached a stumbling point about their abilities or ideas as an artist."

All of this comes together when the artist starts designing memorable characters. For Final Fantasy XIV Mogi-san reveals he likes to give them a little more of a manga or anime feel, "to make them more unique." ➤

Yusuke Mogi

REFLECTIONS IN CRYSTAL

Mogi-san's dramatic illustration to promote the FFXIV: Shadowbringers's Reflections in Crystal release shows the mysterious Crystal Exarch character. The artist says he draws inspiration from books, anime and even other video games.

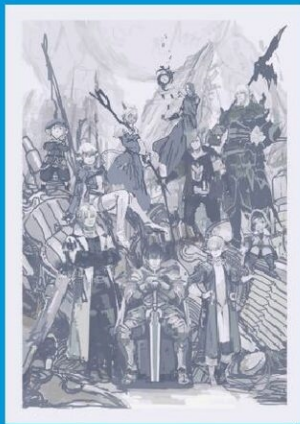
Yusuke Mogi

ImagineFX



COVER DESIGN SECRETS

Yusuke Mogi painted this issue's cover. Here he reveals some of the thinking behind its creation...



1 SET THE COMPOSITION

The moon needed to play a big role in the illustration, Mogi-san explains: "I did consider how to plan it out in landscape, but since it would be desirable to have the moon [...] above everyone's heads at the top, I started with the portrait composition."



2 REDRAWING THE PALADIN

"Initially, I had drawn the paladin in a pose where he's sitting [...] but because he was seated, his face was slightly below the centre of the image. I received feedback [from Naoki Yoshida]: 'He doesn't look like the protagonist; please adjust the face so that it is more in the centre.'"



3 CHARACTER PLACEMENT

"Since a lot of figures have black costumes, I placed them so that they wouldn't be so close together. I tried to balance the difference in heights and sizes of the weapons so that the whole body of the characters could be included in the picture."

FINAL ARTWORK

To the moon

"Since the key Job this time is Paladin and the moon is an important location, I decided on the overall concept around these two elements."

Setting the composition

"The most fun characters would be the Warrior of Light and Estinien, especially because this time around the paladin's AF [Artifact Armour] is based around plate mail. As such, the design doesn't have a great affinity with the costumes of either Thancred or Alphinaud."

A sense of variety

"I decided to express the wide-ranging world of FFXIV by intentionally placing the Warrior of Light between Thancred and Alphinaud, while placing Estinien with his heavy armour at the back, having them blend in with the others as a whole."

Interview



SAMURAI AF
AF, or Artifact Armour, is new gear gained through levelling. Mogi-san says great care is taken to ensure each new gear feels unique and unified.

DRAGON AF COLLECTION
Mogi-san will contrast his realistic character designs with exotic armour concepts.

»» The artist shares his way of working: "For the face, I'll make the nose slightly small and the eyes a little far apart. I guess I try to create a face that's somewhere between anime and real life. By doing so, they look good in the striking and unrealistic costume designs, but also it enables me to provide ideas that are in line with the game's graphics and capabilities to express those characters. However, we don't want to make a game with just beautiful faces, and in this regard I try to employ ingenuity to recreate many unique faces in the game."

COSTUME DESIGN

Games such as Final Fantasy XIV are successful for their must-own costume and asset design as much as the impact of the characters. Here Mogi-san also invests time and creativity in coming up with unique ideas he knows gamers will love to collect.

He explains how there's not a set policy in regards to which pieces of gear they expect players to want or wear in-game as sets, and which are designed to combine themselves. "This isn't everything but as a general policy. There are some pieces of gear that we want players to wear as a full set and others that we'd like players to pick and choose various combinations."

There is, however, game design at play. "Raid rewards and token rewards [...] motivate players to collect gear, so I try to design gear that has an integrated and impactful design, which would make players want to gather the full set," says Mogi-san.

“I try to design gear that has an integrated and impactful design”



FUTURES REWRITTEN
Promotional art created for the FFXIV: Shadowbringers 5.4 update. Mogi-san says he's often inspired by anime.

"On the other hand," he reflects, "I endeavour to prepare crafted sets and instanced dungeon rewards with a combination of materials, so that players can enjoy relative freedom in how they want to equip each individual piece as they play."

STAY THE COURSE

Mogi-san talks as an artist constantly adjusting to the new rules and workflows of game design. But within that strict production setup he still manages to eke out his own style – one that offers a graceful link between digital art and a deft traditional approach to design.

"I'm constantly changing my taste in drawing and the direction of my ideas, but I'd say that my approach to design basically remains unchanged," reflects the artist. "Having said that, the times are changing at a very fast pace, and I don't know what will happen in the future."

He jokes: "I always just give out a plethora of ideas, so it would be an easier job for me if an AI could produce the clean versions of the designs..."

Somehow we think AI couldn't replace Mogi-san's talent. ●

REAPER

Mogi-san created this dramatically whispy illustration to showcase the new Reaper Job (classes in the game) for FFXIV: Endwalker.



Sketchbook

Sabin Boykinov

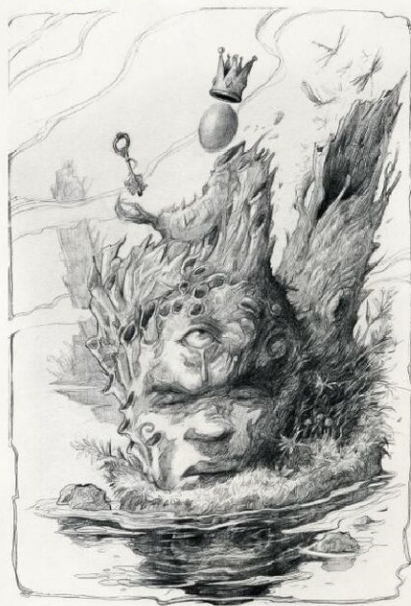
Explore the magical forests, mysterious swamps and the ocean depths that feature in this concept artist's sketchbook

Artist PROFILE

Sabin Boykinov
LOCATION: Bulgaria



Sabin is a concept artist working in the games industry. He's based at Ubisoft Sofia and is involved in many popular titles. He also creates traditional illustrations and outdoor art inspired by nature and fairy tales. When he's not painting or drawing, you'll find him hiking up mountains, listening to music or poring over his art books.
artstation.com/boykinov



TALES FROM THE LAKE

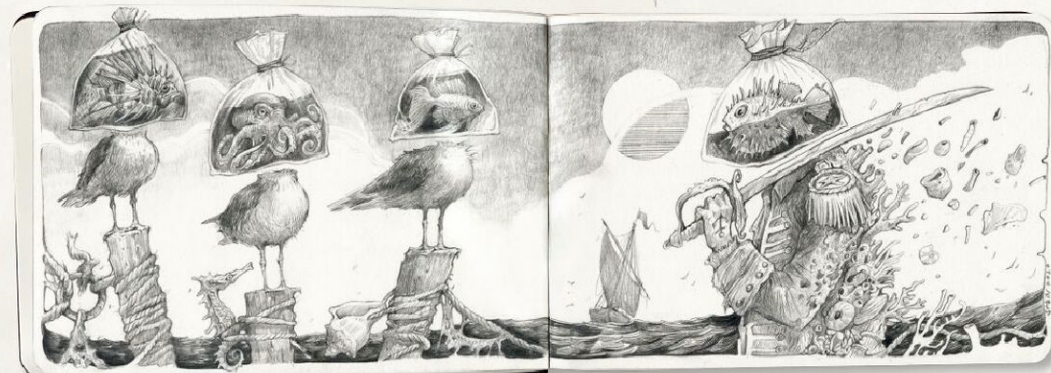
"Pencil work inspired by my favourite fairytale topics: knights and mysterious swamps. I tried to tell a story of a long-forgotten battle and the remains of a knight who's gradually become part of the environment. Now he's a home or a resting place for animals."

SWAMP KING

"This is another one of my fairytale interpretations of a character who lives in a mystical place. I love to explore certain ideas in the tales and to use symbols when creating my personal vision of the character."

SEASIDE STORIES

"I created this illustration for a contest run by an amazing illustrator, Dimitrios Pantazis, based on his artwork of a fish in a plastic bag. I draw a regular day by the seaside, as seen through the eyes of this character."





THE EXPLORER

"This is my interpretation of how a diver can have an interesting experience even at the bottom of the ocean."

“Every Halloween, for the past three or four years, I’ve done a tribute pencil work”

COLOUR SKETCHES

"A small collection of colour pencil sketches. I try to combine regular subjects in each one, adding some visual storytelling."

THE SAMURAI'S TALE

"Every Halloween, for the past three or four years, I've done a tribute pencil work. This is last year's Halloween piece, which is inspired by samurai tales of heroes who can take either human or animal form."



Sketchbook

THE LOST FRIEND

"A pencil illustration inspired by tales of knights. It shows the idea of how medieval people imagined nature, especially forests, as a place full of secrets and perhaps ghosts, too."

FOREST SPIRIT

"The idea of how nature acquires the spirit of a long-time dead warrior. There are some Norse elements in the helmet and the birch tree in the background."



“I was showing the idea of how medieval people imagined nature, especially forests...”



YOUR BODY IS A TEMPLE

"A sketch I did for Alex Hovey's 'draw this in your style' lockdown contest Your Body is a Temple. It contains some of my favourite symbolic objects from knightly tales, such as a spear, a dragon on a helmet and a thistle."

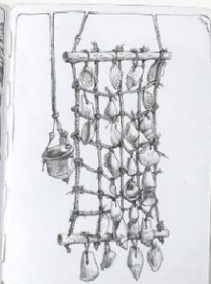
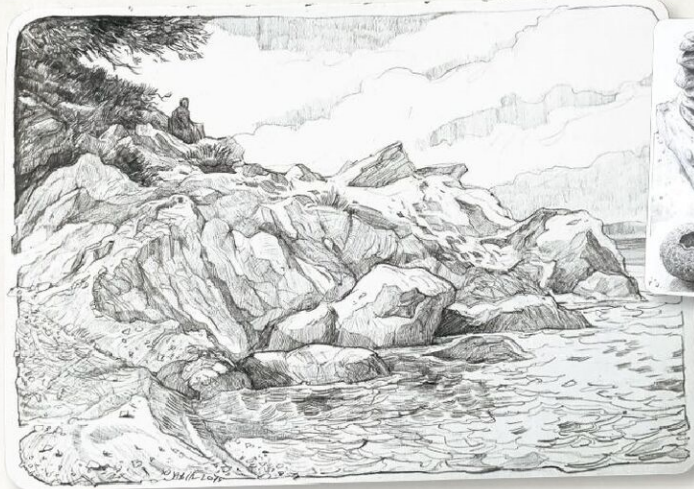
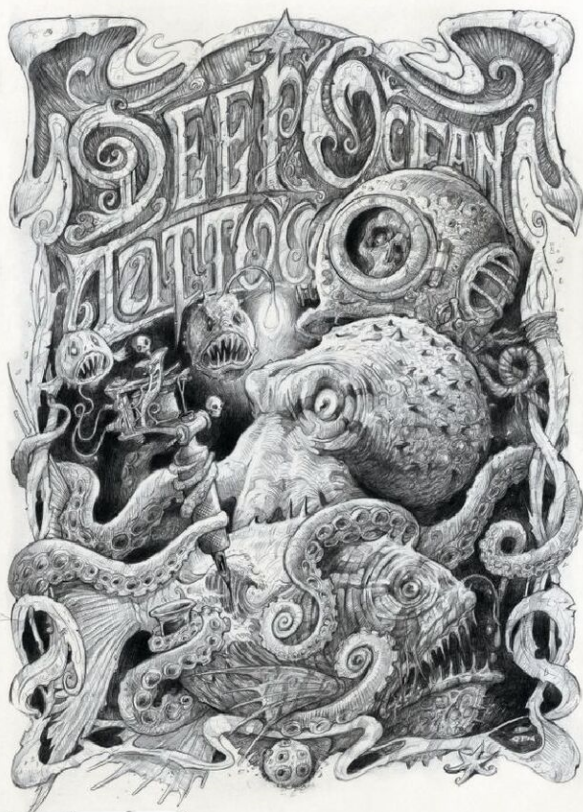


ST NIKOLAS DAY

"St Nikolas Day is a highly anticipated day of celebration here in Bulgaria, for all people connected with the sea. Because my childhood related to the seaside and with many cats who live in the fishermen's houses, I did this sketch to show a day in the life of a fisherman's cats."

DEEP OCEAN TATTOO

"I love tattoo culture so I did a small tribute to it, creating a kind of underwater studio of an octopus."



SKETCHES FROM THE ROAD

"I love travelling and spend a lot of time doing it, exploring the coastline of Greece or places like my home city. I always keep a small sketchbook in my bag. This is a collection of sketches I did during my travels."

Do you want to share your sketches with your fellow ImagineFX readers? Send us an email with a selection of your art, captions for each piece and a photo and bio of yourself to sketchbook@imaginefx.com

Feature



Let the art do the talking is something you don't hear too often in the social media age. A new

illustration is often accompanied by interviews, hot takes and reactions. The art team behind Final Fantasy XIV and its latest expansion, Endwalker, are a little more old fashioned. They rarely appear for interviews, safe in the knowledge that the art they create is some of the best in the industry.

Speaking exclusively to ImagineFX, we meet some of the talented artists behind one of the longest-running video game series. With Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker releasing 7 December, the latest expansion for the successful



THE ART OF FINAL FAN

MMORPG, the famously shy artists behind the worlds, creatures and characters reveal their approach to producing consistently beautiful art and game designs.

BACKGROUND BY DESIGN

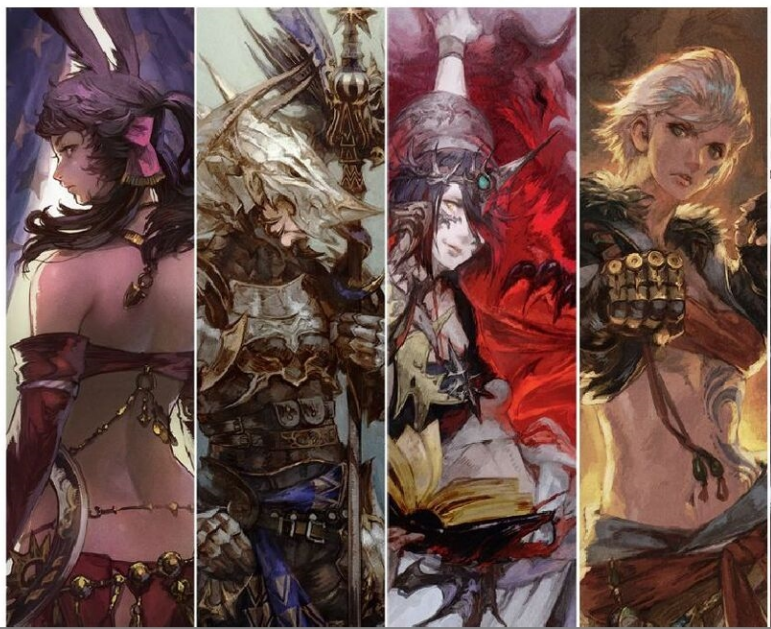
Like many, background concept specialist Rokuma Saito knew from an early age he wanted to be an artist. At high school he'd "visually express the landscapes that I imagined in my head." It was an obsession that led him to "try my hand as an artist in game production".

The names of the places he's helped create – Thavnair, Eulmore and Abalathia – play on the tongue; the dextrous titles suggest magical, extravagant worlds and they don't disappoint. Saito-san's landscapes feature rocky plateaus teetering on crystal points and colourful towns nestled in green mountains that recall southern European villages by way ➡

ENDWALKER JOBS

Jobs are the classes players can use in the FFXIV online MMORPG, and art team lead Yusuke Mogi has illustrated them all...

Yusuke Mogi

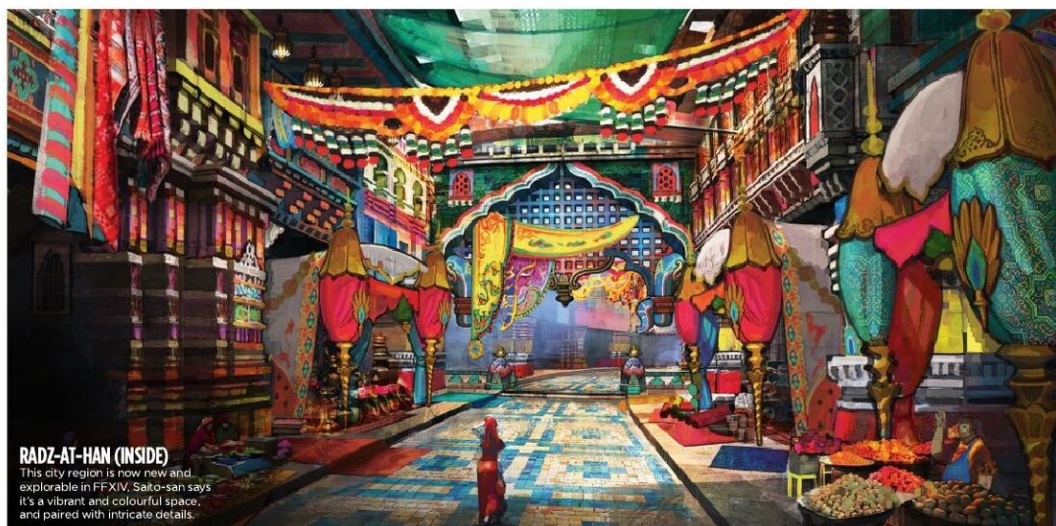




TASY XIV ENDWALKER

THE ART OF
FINAL
FANTASY XIV
SPECIAL





RADZ-AT-HAN (INSIDE)

This city region is now new and explorable in FFXIV. Saito-san says it's a vibrant and colourful space, and paired with intricate details.



EULMORE AETHERYTE

Concept art created by Saito-san to illustrate the town of Eulmore, first introduced in Shadowbringers.

➤ of Mumbai. The worlds he paints appear to be in motion and inspired by competing influences, but they work together to create innovative spaces for players to become lost in.

The artist says he's inspired by "the scenery of places I've visited in the past, photos of places I've never been to, pictures by various artists," as well as films, games, anime and manga. "Like many artists," continues Saito-san, "I get my inspiration from the things around me. In the last few years I've learned a great deal from the Impressionists of the 19th century."

When creating an environment Saito-san will look to the real world but then clash, crush and combine locations to find new ideas. His style is unique in video game concept art because it's defined and stylistically unique while remaining identifiable as Final Fantasy art. The artist uses vibrant colour to create restless spaces that demand to be explored. He tells us his style was developed early in life,

while still at high school. He read the manga Record of Lodoss War, illustrated by Akihiro Yamada – "that totally blew me away," he says. This, shares Saito-san, became the starting point for his current art style. The artist clarifies: "The final turning point for me to join the games industry was Vagrant Story, which was released by Squaresoft [prior to the merger] in 2000. I was quite heavily influenced by Akihiko Yoshida, who handled the art for this title."

BRINGING LIFE TO SCENES

The concept art for the city of Radz-at-Han inside the land of Thavnair, new to Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker, showcases Saito-san's ability to draw in the viewer. The scene is bustling with activity, the characters urge us into the painting, and the use of colour rarely lets the eye settle. We're forced to scour the scene picking up visual clues and cues as to what this place will be like to roam within.



VIERA SAGE

Magis-san's new Viera concept for Endwalker, created with a line-art style influenced by Akihiko Yoshida.



ALPHINAUD LEVELLEUR

Namae-san created this concept to show how faithful companion Alphinaud Leveilleur will look in Endwalker, the first redesign of the character since 2013.

RADZ-AT-HAN

Saito-san's colour-packed art teases how the new city of Radz-At-Han will look to players of FFXIV: Endwalker.



Humbly, Saito-san says he feels colouring is one of his weakest skills "because during my time as a student, I'd always draw in monochrome". It's an area of his art he's been working hard on since becoming a professional.

"The impact that colour has in art on the viewer is so great that it can evoke emotions and stories all by

itself," divulges Saito-san, explaining colour use in concept art is vitally important. "In the case of game production, I think that colour can help modellers and designers understand the concept art. Based on these ideas, I'd say that in addition to 'enriching the appearance of the picture', I place importance on 'conveying the elements contained within, without misunderstanding'."

Saito-san begins a new concept with paper and pencil to come up with the raw ideas. "I don't often start immediately with drawing digitally.

I let the image develop on paper, and when I'm satisfied that I've reached a stage where I feel it'll work – even if it's not fully drawn – I'll scan it," he says.

The scan marks the start of the digital phase for Saito-san, who then uses Photoshop mainly for his background paintings and switches to Paint Tool SAI for the character's line-art, importing these into Photoshop when detail is needed.

Saito-san says this is his new workflow: "There used to be a time when I'd complete the production of design and concept art using only ➡

◆◆ I think that colour can help modellers and designers understand the concept art ◆◆



➤ traditional 'analog' materials, but now I've settled on this way of doing things, considering the combination of time, quality and freedom."

GIVE ART CHARACTER

Lead character concept artist Ayumu Namae has been on a similar journey with her art. There was a time, she tells us, that she would only use Photoshop, but for the past five years Clip Studio Paint has been her go-to software for Final Fantasy XIV designs.

"Functionally," she begins, "there's not much difference between the two, but I feel that the touch when drawing and/or the sensation of it feels better for me."

As with Saito-san, Namae-san begins most concept art for her game projects using pencils for her line-work, "but sometimes with mechanical pencils or ballpoint pens," she adds, telling us she'll then digitally paint the scanned sketches.

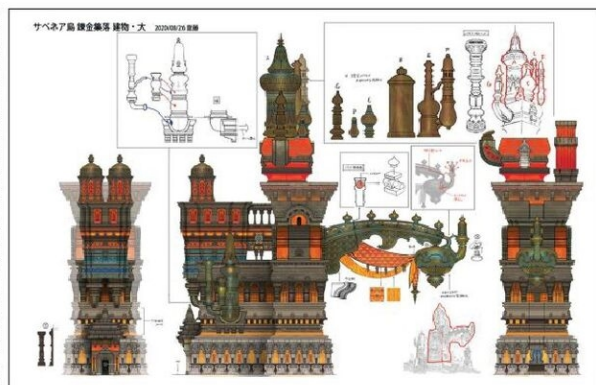
♦♦ I feel that the touch when drawing and/or the sensation of it feels better for me ♦♦

DANCER

Namae-san says: "I often create design illustrations or promotional illustrations by using a combination of various tools such as pencil, pen, watercolour, and airbrush so that no 'analog' lines remain."

THAVNAIR BUILDING

Saito-san says: "The reason I started drawing in the first place was due to the huge influence of Neon Genesis Evangelion, which I watched when I was a young boy."



"I'm not very particular about how I draw, and I still haven't settled on a certain way of drawing because I go through a trial-and-error process every time, depending on the motif, subject matter and technique I want to try at the time," she reveals.

"When I want to minimise the time spent on a design illustration, I leave the 'analog' lines in place and only lightly colour and adjust the lines, but when the texture and feel of the

materials are important design elements, I may include the texture of dirt and so on in the illustration."

Namae-san has been designing characters since 2006's Final Fantasy XII, but she's become more known for her work on Final Fantasy XIV and its expansions, conceptualising and updating some of the main heroes and villains of the online series.

Her love of the Final Fantasy series comes through as we delve into

THE AMANO INFLUENCE

Iconic Final Fantasy artist Yoshitaka Amano became a crucial influence, reflects **Ayumi Namae**



Ayumi Namae was responsible for the various forms of the Bard's costume but says the Choral Attire that was created for the 2006 expansion A Realm Reborn is one of her favourites.

"It's a particularly memorable set of gear," the artist says. "Looking back now, I think it was the first step in incorporating Amano-san's graceful Final Fantasy design lines into Final Fantasy XIV's equipment."

Now, some years later, the line-work and designs of the legendary Final Fantasy artist Yoshitaka Amano are incorporated into, and inspire, much of the work of the Final Fantasy XIV art team. Looking back before A Realm Reborn, Namae-san says: "At that time, the designs were mainly rugged and there were no pieces of gear close to Amano's design

lines. When Naoki Yoshida was appointed to Final Fantasy XIV and during the gear selection process, the idea of Choral Attire was selected for the AF1 series [AF refers to Artifact Armor, gear earned with level increases], which we were working on as the centrepiece under the statement of 'creating a Final Fantasy' for Patch 2.0. I was, of course, happy, but at the same time I was confused and worried."

She continues: "The designer team, including the 3D team, now has more experience and is able to create designs with a higher degree of freedom than when we were working on Patch 2.0. However, when we were working on the Choral Attire there were many asymmetrical parts and a large area of soft cloth that was difficult to express with polygons, making the production quite a challenging process."

MALE VIERA

You'll be able to play as a male Viera in Endwalker, and Mogi-san gives us a glimpse.



White Mage AF4
Final Fantasy XIV
ART: AYUMI NAMAIE



Namae-san's influences, particularly on her rendering of armour. She has a clear passion for the RPG series, saying "the job images from the early Final Fantasy pixel art days and Yoshitaka Amano's design lines in the Final Fantasy series," have been a major inspiration for her. But Namae-san also looks to the real world, historical fashion and fantasy series such as Game of Thrones and The Lord of the Rings for new ideas.

"Final Fantasy XIV has many different cultures, so I gather motifs that suit each of them and reconstruct them to create the base of the design," she tells us, offering an example. The Paladin had an orthodox platemail-based design in the new game. "It has] a little bit of glamour," says ➤

WHITE MAGE

Namae-san says she designed this mage character based on medieval fantasy film costumes and as a reference to the older Final Fantasy pixel art games.



FF14
af4
af4

2011/08/30
ayumi namae



FF14
af4
af4

Glv

Sho

2011/08/31
ayumi namae

A DESIGN THAT LOOK TO THE PAST

"The bard's Tier 1 Artifact Armor, Choral Attire, was designed with Yoshitaka Amano's design line in the Final Fantasy series strongly in mind."



CREATING THE ICONIC ALEXANDER PRIME

Tetsu Tsukamoto details how he approaches conceiving the stages of a classic boss

Give it legs

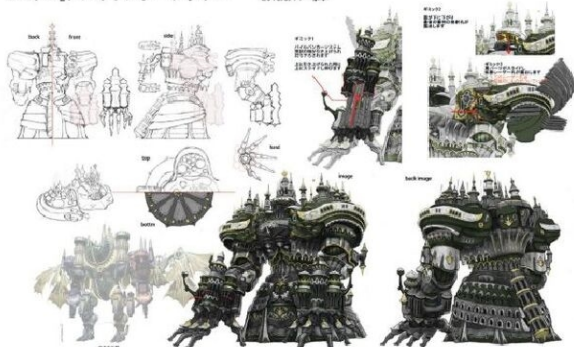
"The planning team asked me to give Alexander legs, and I had already designed an Alexander Prime with legs, but it was rejected. So when I accepted the request, they wanted me to transform Brute Justice and Cruise Chaser, and merge the two together."

Work backwards

"In the past, when I designed Summons in Final Fantasy XIII and figures based on transformation/combining elements such as Brute Justice, the methodology that I employed was to 'design backwards from after the transformation'. I couldn't use the same technique for Perfect Alexander, and I had no choice but to take the safe road and make the Cruise Chaser plug into the body to form the head."

3.4ボス_アレキサンダープライム

2016/3/14 塚本



5.1パーフェクトアレキサンダー(絶)

2019/3/5 塚本

変形プロセスを重視してください。プロセスの邪魔になるデザインは無視し、変形完成状態でバランスを取る形でも良いです

カラーは変形直後は色が混じっている状態で、完成した後、統一させたいです

変形内部のデザインは後から追加いたします

image



back

front



アレキサンダー合体ロボ

2013/6/11 発表



Designing transitions

"As for Brute Justice, I ran out of ideas when I re-disassembled the transformed body and replaced the positioning of the arms and legs. To this end, a meeting was held to discuss the transformation and combining process. As a result, we settled on the idea that for Brute Justice would first be separated and absorbed by Alexander Prime, and the arms and legs would then protrude out from the body, which was suggested [by] the team responsible for in-game implementation. This idea didn't occur to me because I was thinking about Final Fantasy XIII Summons and Brute as a 'toy' of sorts, and as such I was thinking about transformations that would be physically possible."

Beat the boss?

"The rest was done on the game side. Fantastic model data was prepared, and the textures and motion added. The only regret I have is that I wasn't able to take on the challenge of Alexander Ultimate due to my shortcomings as a player."

➡ Namaan-san, who says the design was kept more realistic to match the series tone of this final expansion.

"When [Naoki] Yoshida made the rough selection, he had a vision for the opening act of the trailer," says Namaan-san. His words, she tells us, were: "a 'Warrior of Light' in a hooded robe is walking on the moon, looking down, and every step is shown in the shot, and then comes the heavy sound of clanging armour".

She continues: "I expanded on the visuals from those words, bringing to mind the heroic image of the Paladin in the Final Fantasy series."

TELLING STORIES

At the heart of Namaan-san's approach is for concept art and character design to tell a story. "Each design is a piece of the world of Final Fantasy XIV, so the task is to create a design that visually expresses the cultural sphere and setting while incorporating elements that are appropriate for that piece. With each update, the world of Final Fantasy XIV expands, so it's hard to differentiate aspects of the game from the rest, but I'm very happy when I can express it well."

Digging deeper into this aspect or constant change, Namaan-san explains

◆ Each design is a piece of the world of Final Fantasy XIV... ◆

how working on a game like Final Fantasy XIV that's forever changing and improving with live updates is both satisfying and challenging. The release cycle of updates is fast and the art team responds to feedback from players to incorporate changes. "I think it's one of the most rewarding things that you cannot experience for offline titles," she says.

Creating concept art for an online game comes with its own peculiar difficulties, says Namaan-san. The sheer number of players in a game like Final Fantasy XIV, a record-breaking 67,000 concurrent players on PC alone, ensures there are many restrictions on the specifications of assets.

"There are also a lot of rules for players' gear, especially when it comes to the length and spread of hems, shoes and gloves," adds Namaan-san, "so that they can be combined ➡"





➡ without odd overlaps with the varieties of gear that increase following each expansion." Such things don't dampen the team's creativity, however, as Namae-san explains all "ideas are freely expressed" without restraint, and are then worked on to meet the needs of the 3D art team.

"Even if the design seems difficult to implement at the rough stage, the process of looking for loopholes in the specifications and devising ways to create a new impression is an interesting part of the work," says the artist. "Thanks to the experience we've accumulated with the 3D team, we have much more freedom in design now than we did in the early days."

EARS, TAILS AND MORE

There are more pressures on an artist designing for Final Fantasy XIV than technical specs. The game has a roster of immaculately crafted races and

KUGANE

This vibrant city debuted in the Stormblood expansion and is one of artist Saito-san's favourites. "It's where I was able to let my creativity run wild," he says.



species, and each has unique considerations when designing armour sets, for example. Namae-san says complex designs for characters with tails and ears, such as the fan-favourite Viera, can be challenging.

"The opportunities to design exclusively for them are quite limited, but since the tail and ears are the most distinctive parts of the design silhouette, including proportional

aspects such as height and muscle mass, I try to design them in a way that makes the most of the characteristics of the race and the image associated with them" explains the artist.

In the case of Alisaie Leveilleur's costume from new expansion Endwalker, Namae-san reveals this is the first completely original design since the game's reboot with A Realm Reborn seven years ago. "So I designed it to take advantage of her ears as an Elezen," reflects Namae-san, "and her delicate, lithe, fairy-like proportions."

Weapons are given as much time as characters, and many members of the art team are often drafted in to create a new concept. Nouliths, used by Alphinaud, a Sage in this expansion, are new to Endwalker, and Namae-san details the process of bringing this new item to the game. Several young artists on the team drafted rough ideas based on ideas given by the "battle team", and one was adopted.

"It was a very interesting idea as a weapon type that hadn't appeared in Final Fantasy XIV so far, but it was impossible to implement as-is due to

WILD CREATIVITY

"It's hard for me to name a favourite piece of art because I tend to lose track of what I've worked on a short while after delivering them. If I had to pick one, I'd say Kugane, where I was able to let my creativity run wild," says Saito-san.





the specifications," says Namae-san. Art team lead Yusuke Mogi refined the idea and later, with the 3D production team and motion team, art staff at the studio with experience in mechanical design created the weapon as players will find it in the game. As we discover from speaking with Mogi-san and Tetsu Tsukamoto, this is an art team working together to bring fresh ideas to the game.

"Many staff members are involved in the creation of new weapons for new Jobs, but compared to all the new Job weapons we've implemented so far, the design of the sage's weapon was more difficult and challenging right from concept selection through to incorporating the specifications," says Namae-san. "Having said that, I believe the end result is that we were able to create a weapon that brings with it a fresh new perspective."

THAVNAIR LANDSCAPE

Saito-san's detailed design for the new area of Thavnair feels inspired by the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East.

BALANCED ART

Saito-san believes good concept art should be beautiful and also useful, saying: "I think that the skill of the artist itself is how well he or she balances these two aspects."



With so much work involved in every aspect of Endwalker's design, we pose Namae-san one more question: when do you know a design is finished? Her answer is typically team-focused, explaining "design completion" happens when everyone involved is happy. On Final Fantasy XIV that means deciding on raw ideas, taking the idea into 3D and creating a clean blueprint of the concept. Each

team's department signs off on the concept, and finally producer and director Naoki Yoshida checks the concept. Yoshida-san himself will often be involved at an early stage to look over ideas.

ROOM FOR NEW IDEAS

It's a process the experienced character concept artist Tetsu Tsukamoto has become familiar with, but the ➤

♦♦ We have much more freedom in design now than we did in the early days ♦♦

THE AETHEROMATIC AUGER

Mogi-san blends his anime and manga influences with more realistic design.



CONCEPT ART REBORN

Art team lead **Yusuke Mogi** breaks down his concept art workflow for Final Fantasy XIV: Endwalker



Yusuke Mogi says creating art becomes a collaborative process as he acts on feedback from the game's

broader art team.

"First, we submit thumbnails to the planners, concept artists, modellers and animators," he says. "After checking them, we get started on 'clean' versions of them. While adjusting based on the feedback and such, we'll make one clean drawing of the idea and a simple three-dimensional drawing."

Mogi-san continues: "If there's anything that should be highlighted for attention, we indicate them directly as notes on the clean drawing. If there's any movement, we discuss with the animators in

advance about what kind of movement mechanics are needed. To this end, a simplified diagram may also be included."

By following his workflow Mogi-san can prevent errors creeping into his designs that could slow down the animation stage. It's simpler and cheaper, he says, to make revisions at the thumbnail stage than in-game when models are being created.

"However," shares Mogi-san, "even after the face graphics have been applied to the actual model, they can often look very different in cutscenes and other situations. Consequently, it's often the case that we'll adjust the faces of characters and humanoid monsters through trial and error after they've been incorporated into the game."



MALE VIERA

Characters are designed to consider how players will use and modify them.



REAPER

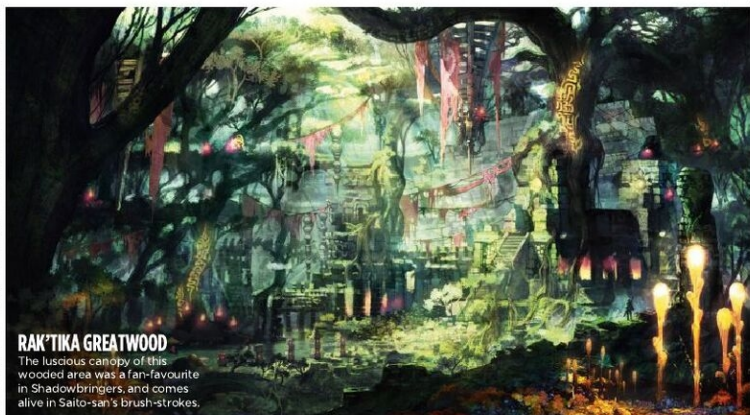
The Reaper Job is new to Endwalker, and Mogi-san has had fun creating the shapes and details for this class.

➡ process doesn't dampen his creativity or love of stumbling on to creative new designs. Fan-favourite creature Nidhogg is one of Tsukamoto-san's best, and it came about because the studio's process and his search for inspiration came together.

"When it came to Nidhogg," explains Tsukamoto-san, "I was originally requested to create two figures, comprising a black dragon and white dragon. However, even after showing rough drafts to my superior at the time more than a dozen times, I just couldn't get the greenlight. The thing that stands out is that in the end I got approval for the first proposal that was initially turned down."

He continues: "I tried to design Nidhogg and Hraesvelgr as contrasts, incorporating scales and scissor-shaped horns into Nidhogg, while placing fur and curled horns on Hraesvelgr. I changed the outline to distinguish them from the big-bellied dragons we had in Final Fantasy XIV thus far. The inspiration for those designs came to me by imagining that I was completely surrounded by their long bodies! At the time, I had just been transferred to the Final Fantasy XIV team from the old Final Fantasy XIII Versus (currently Final Fantasy XV) team, so I had a lot of ideas for attack methods and such."

Tsukamoto-san enjoys the workflow of combining ideas, styles and even previously ignored concepts. When he was asked to create a "cruel" Summon (the series' extravagant monstrous



special attacks) for Final Fantasy X, he took inspiration from a dark fantasy manga and anime to craft the fan-favourite Anima. "From there I studied the atmosphere produced by artists such as Yasushi Nirasawa and Takayuki Takeya," he tells us. "I found that both of the rough figures I produced had a good vibe, so I connected them so that one was at the top and the other at the bottom."

The artist tells us: "It makes me incredibly happy to see that Anima is being used again, with the appearance this time in Final Fantasy XIV."

A FRAMEWORK FOR TEAMWORK

The artists we speak with have a clear passion for not simply this iteration of Final Fantasy, but a love for the series



Y'SHTOLA

Fan-favourite character
Y'shtola returns in
FFXIV: Endwalker.

as a whole. They have a deep understanding of its lore, design and concepts, and are given room to create new ideas with a framework that encourages teamwork.

Reflecting on Tsukamoto-san's Anima concept, designed for a previous game, reworked for Final Fantasy XIV and created from imaginative references and guided by a broad and talented team, it's typical of the studio's approach.

Endwalker, as the name suggests, is the finale of the years-long Hydaelyn and Zodiark story arc that has kept players enthralled. "It's the culmination of everything Final Fantasy XIV has done so far," comments art team lead Yusuke Mogi. "From the diverse cultural cityscapes to the sinister dungeons, you'll be able to appreciate a vast world that can be described as representing the essence of the Final Fantasy series."

The work this team has put in over the years represents some of the most inventive in video games, and Mogi-san urges us all to play to the end. But don't take his or our word for how impressive this is. When all is said and done, let the art do the talking...

💡 The inspiration for those designs came to me by imagining that I was surrounded by their long bodies! 💡



EULMORE

Saito-san got into art because of the anime Neon Genesis Evangelion. "At the time I was constantly copying the characters drawn by Yoshiyuki Sadamoto," he says.

Complete your collection!

ImagineFX Recent editions

Missed an issue? Here's how you can order previous print or digital editions of ImagineFX

Recent print editions

Visit: bit.ly/ifxbackissues

Apple Newsstand

Download us from the Newsstand app on your device or visit: ifxm.ag/apple-ifx

Android, PC or Mac

Pocketmags: pocketmags.com/imaginefx

Zinio: zinio.com/gb/imaginefx-m2956

Other devices

We're available via nook on Barnes & Noble and Amazon's range of Fire tablets.



PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



Issue 207

Christmas 2021

Immerse yourself in the world of Dune, as artists, art directors and costume designers describe their work on the film, and the book's influence. Plus: paint fantasy environments, D&D card art and up the ante in your portrait art.



Issue 206

December 2021

Cover artist Christophe Young, Lauren Brown and Rafael Sarmento bring you insights on original character design. We also talk to Spider-Verse artist Patrick O'Keefe, concept artist Karla Ortiz and illustrator Iris Compiet.



Issue 205

November 2021

Joshua Swaby brings Harley Quinn to life on the cover! Inside there's Adi Granov's life lessons, Terry Dobson's tutorial on comic covers, David Najayama revamps Zorro and Igor Wolski draws in the ligne claire comic style.



Issue 204

October 2021

Create spontaneous art with cover artist Ayran Oberto. Plus, master painter JS Rossbach shares his advice for perfecting portraits, learn to paint vintage fantasy art from 3D scans and master fish-eye perspective.

BUY PRINT EDITIONS
OF IMAGINEFX AT:

bit.ly/ifxbackissues

magazinesdirect.com



NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Workshops



**Workshops assets
are available...**

Download each workshop's resources by turning to page 6. And if you see the video workshop badge, you can watch the artist in action, too.

Advice from the world's best artists



This issue:

56 Design a limitless game environment

Brandt Andrist's landscape has countless possibilities...

62 Enjoy painting in watercolours

Isis Sousa covers Painter 2022's three sets of watercolours.

64 Improve your boss designs

Tristan Tait creates a boss character for a 2D indie game.

70 Set up a modular art workflow

Get more from what you already have, says Thomas Scholes!

76 Speedpaint a mech design

See how Kobe Sek uses negative space to sketch mech concepts.



Blender & Photoshop

CONCEPT A LIMITLESS GAME ENVIRONMENT

Using simple 3D techniques, **Brandt Andrist** creates a procedural landscape with countless possibilities...





Artist PROFILE

Brandt Andrist
LOCATION: Sweden

Art director and concept artist Brandt has been part of the video games industry since 2011, first in Seattle and now in Sweden. He loves to paint, play music, and hang out with his family.
brandt.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!



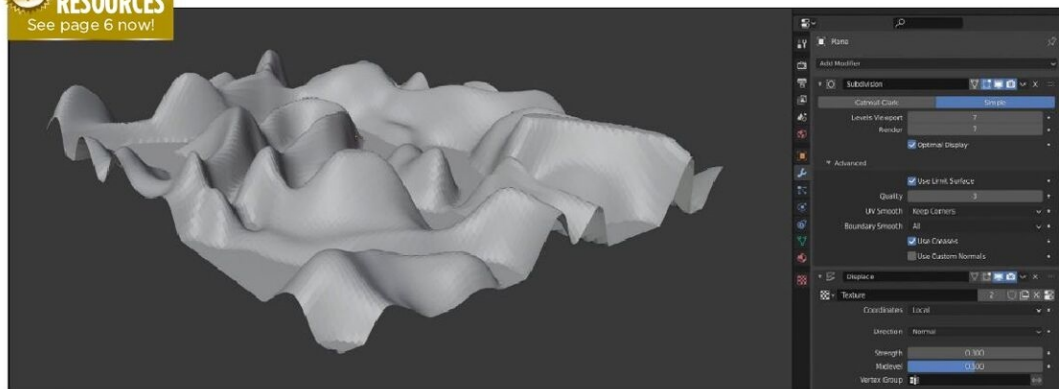
The best technology meets us where we are. That's why I keep my approach to 3D simple. Instead of learning every tool, I ask myself: "How can this software empower my creativity?"

I'll use Blender to create terrain by adding modifiers to a flat plane. I populate this terrain by modelling simple buildings, trees and rocks, and scattering them across the

surface with a particle system. Instead of hand-crafting the terrain and hand-placing props, I create them procedurally so that I can shuffle my composition like a deck of cards. I do this so I can explore the scene, seeing it with fresh eyes each time, and rendering whenever I find a strong composition.

In Photoshop, I'll create colour by mashing together photos, sketch detailed architecture, and paint with custom brushes I've grown to love.

To get the most from this workshop, you'll need some basic knowledge of Blender and Photoshop. If you've ever modelled and rendered a basic scene in Blender, you'll be able to follow along. If you'd like to learn more about Blender, I recommend Blender Guru on YouTube. He has hundreds of hours of content, and his beginner series is perfect for anyone looking to break into 3D (also take a look at our sister magazine, *3D World* - ed).



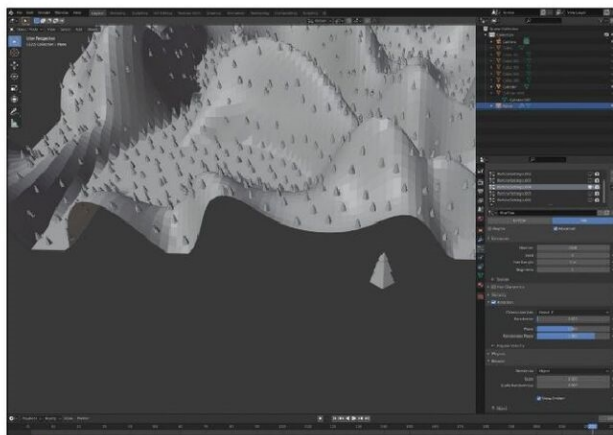
1 Establish the terrain for the scene

I need terrain for objects in my environment to sit on. I create a plane and add a subdivize modifier and a displacement modifier. On the Texture tab I create a Distorted Noise texture. I use Original Perlin for the Distortion type, then select this texture in the Displacement modifier.



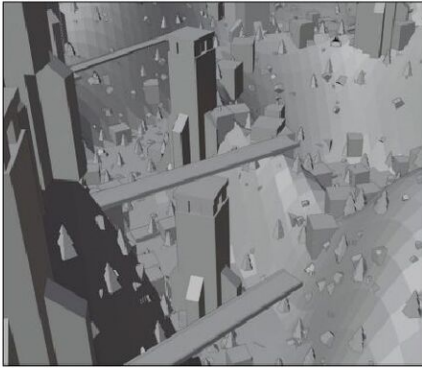
2 Generate simple 3D models

Next I create some simple props to populate my terrain. I go for some tall towers, smaller concrete blocks, bridges, trees and rocks. Keep them simple, and stick to basic modelling techniques like extrude, bevel and cut. Create objects you can duplicate throughout your scene, and that would be tedious to place by hand.



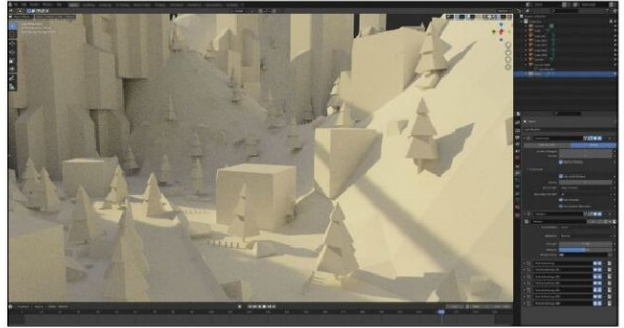
3 Create particle systems

Now select the terrain, and go to the Particle Properties tab. Click the plus symbol to create a new particle index, and link one of the props using the Eyedropper tool in the Object sub menu. Getting the right settings takes experimentation, but changing the Particle Type from Emitter to Hair is crucial.



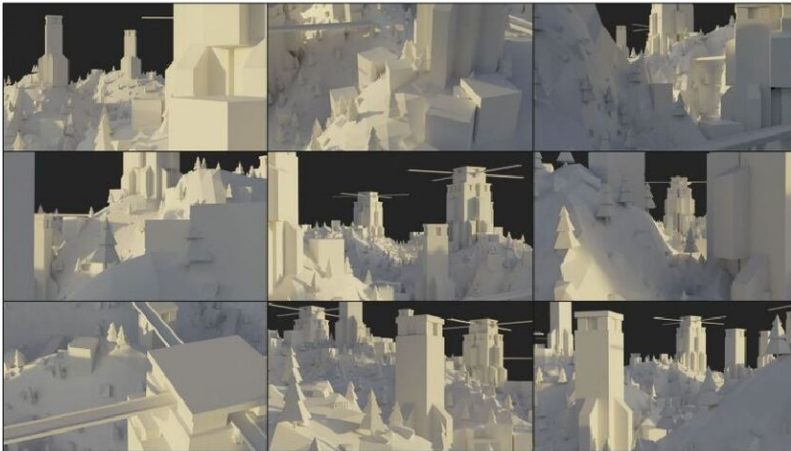
4 Populate your landscape

Repeat the previous step until you have an assortment of props all sitting on top of your terrain. Select each particle index, and adjust its parameters to alter the look of your environment. You can adjust the total number, size, orientation and random variation of each prop type. Try adding additional prop types for a diverse environment.



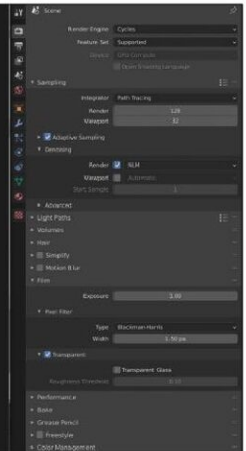
5 Explore the scene for interesting compositions

I set up basic lighting by using an HDRI image in the World shader. This creates realistic lighting without the need to place individual lights in the scene. Next, I pan around the scene with the camera looking for interesting compositions. In this stage, I like to pretend I'm a film director scouting locations for a film.



6 Render my chosen environment

In Render Properties I set the Render Engine to Cycles, and enable viewport shading. This way I can see a low-resolution version of the final lighting within my viewport. I also increase my render resolution to 4K, and enable noise reduction and transparent background. I continue to explore the environment, hitting F12 whenever I see a cool composition. ➡➡



Workshops

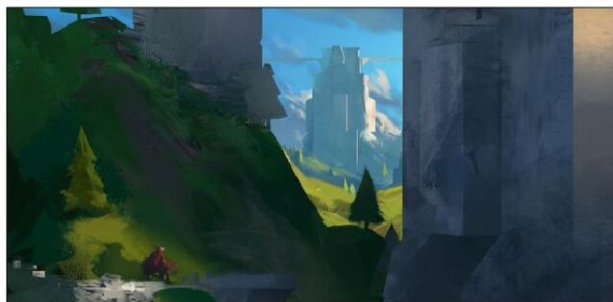
7 Colour palette creation

One way to create a colour palette with a lot of variety and realism is to base it on a good photo. For this painting, I use a photo that I took of a nearby castle here in Sweden, using Levels and Color Balance to create light and dark palettes for the foreground and background.

FOREGROUND



BACKGROUND



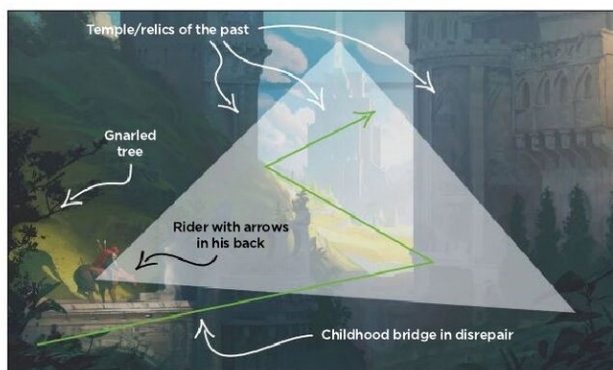
8 Colour thumbnail

Using my new colour palette, I begin blocking in colours. I try to keep my layers simple, using only one new layer for each large fore-, mid- and background element. This will enable me to easily adjust colour and contrast as I paint.



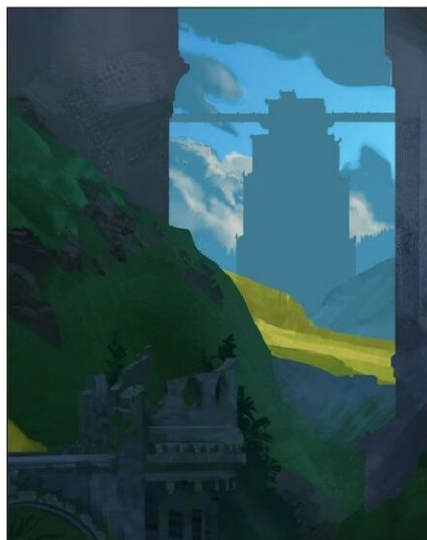
9 Sketch design and details

Now that I have a composition that I'm happy with, along with strong perspective and a plan for colour, it's time to zoom in and sketch all of the smaller elements. In preparation for this step I've done a series of studies to familiarise myself with the architecture style, character anatomy and costume, and vegetation.



10 Establish a production plan

The time for exploration is over – it's time to produce the final painting. I write down what is important, what rules of composition I need to follow, and underline the key points of the illustration I have to execute in order to be successful. This ensures that no matter what, I don't get distracted from my goal.



11 Carry out colour blocking

This is essentially a recreation of the colour thumbnail, but this time with added focus on clarity and final polish. I toggle layers on and off, using my sketch, 3D render, and colour thumbnail for reference, depending on what part of the piece I'm trying to create.



12 Painting details in the scene

At this stage, I heavily reference my sketch, using the Lasso tool and textured brushes to create clean, strong shapes. Sometimes detailing means taking a small Round brush and drawing. But it can also mean masking an area and using exactly the right brush to create the impression of detail.

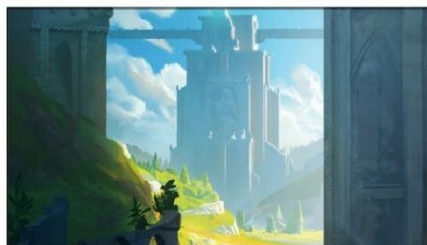
WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES BY GREG RUTKOWSKI

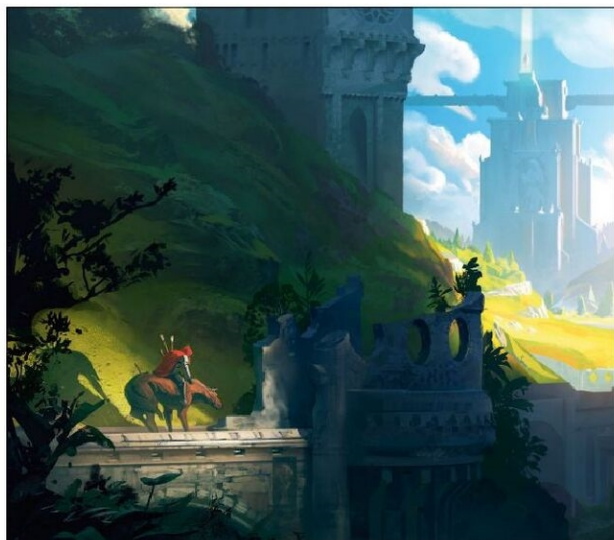


I use a series of Photoshop brushes created by concept artist Greg Rutkowski, which are available on Gumroad and ArtStation for only \$6.



13 Finding balance

Often when I add detail, I lose the balance between foreground and background, creating additional contrast that flattens the painting. To find balance, I refer back to my production plan, using image adjustments to separate the important elements and create strength and unity in the composition.



14 Making final touches

I run the Sharpen tool over my focal points in the foreground, and use the Blur tool to knock back noisy textures. I use the Sponge tool to saturate points of interest, and Dodge to bring out highlights in metallic surfaces. Finally, I play around with Adjustment layers to find dynamic colour and value combinations.

Core Skills: Painter 2022 – Part 4

ENJOY PAINTING IN WATERCOLOURS

Isis Sousa introduces you to Painter 2022's three sets of watercolours and gives her tips on how best to use them



Artist PROFILE
Isis Sousa
 LOCATION: Norway

Isis is an art director, a Corel Painter Master Elite, a Xencelabs Artist and indie filmmaker. She also teaches and speaks at CG events.
isisousa.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES
 See page 6 now!



Most people enjoy looking at watercolour sketches and illustrations. While its most recognisable aspect is the washes, the medium is also used with oils, coloured pencils and other dry painting techniques.

Corel has done extensive research to bring three watercolour sets to Painter 2022's art community. They meet the needs of artists who are

keen to explore and emulate a more traditional approach in their illustrations, as well as providing options for creating a more digital-looking watercolour effect. It's also possible to combine these tools with any other media in Painter 2022, thanks to its enhanced brush and layer technologies.

In this month's instalment we're going to unlock a few secrets that will make it possible to incorporate

this media on your art workflow in a quick and simple way.

Notice that the brushes from each watercolour set will have both traditional and digital qualities. You'll need to experiment with them to find out which ones are a good fit for your art style. Many of these tools are also accessories, rather than the watercolour pigment or wash itself. Think of it as your very own watercolour studio kit!

New brushes added...

Brush Library: Painter 2022 Brushes

- Sargent
- Selection Brushes
- Smart Strokes
- Sponges
- Sumi-e: Buildup
- Sumi-e: Watercolor
- Texture: Cover
- Texture: Cover 2.5D
- Texture: Source Blending
- Thick Paint: Bristles
- Thick Paint: Compatible
- Thick Paint: Palette Knives
- Watercolor: Fringe
- Watercolor: Pigment
- Watercolor: Real

Layer compatibility: Variable Specific

Some brush strokes from this set. When you select them, Painter will point out this media works better in Gel Mode, so select 'Take Care of it For Me' on the Layer Dialog.

To create more intense colours, either repeat/drag brush strokes on top of each other, or duplicate your layer. Remember to set the mode to Gel in case you edit the layer and lose the setting.

The watercolour sets are the final options in Painter's New Brush Library. Here you'll also find auxiliary tools, such as the Splatter Brush for spraying bubbles or the Pure Water, which adds water to the underlying colour (as the name suggests). Also found here are Blenders and more expressive brushes such as the Variable Speckle.

1 Use the Fringe watercolour set for more traditional results

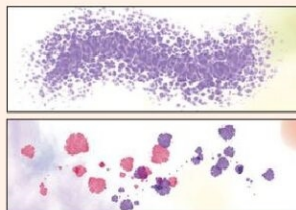
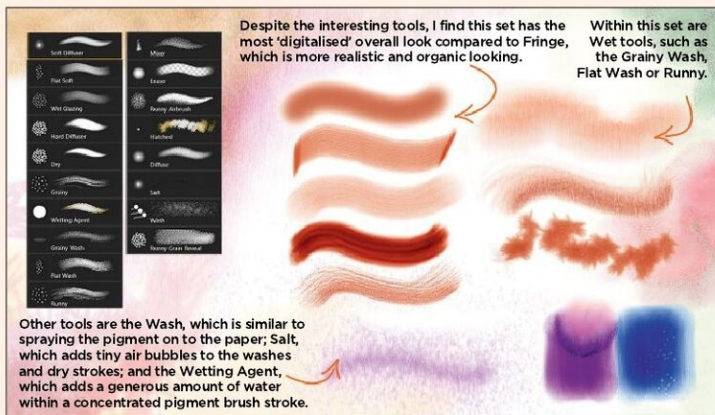
Most tools produce more natural, realistic and soft results, although there are a few that retain a more deliberate, digital look. Overall, the wash effect is more nuanced. If you want to emulate a more traditional look, combine this with a few tools in the Pigment set.

2 Pigment watercolour set

This set features brushes that will enable you to work with a 'drier' technique. It's similar to applying the pigment with minimum wetness. The brushes in this set have another key characteristic: a high density of pigment per brushstroke. This contrasts with Fringe, which has a low concentration of pigment.

3 Real watercolour set

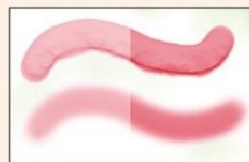
This is the most expressive set, with a fun twist. It mixes the qualities of the previous two, such as brushes that look more realistic and others that look more digital, as well as being loaded with more pigment and water, and vice versa. Some brushes may render colour with more substance than others.



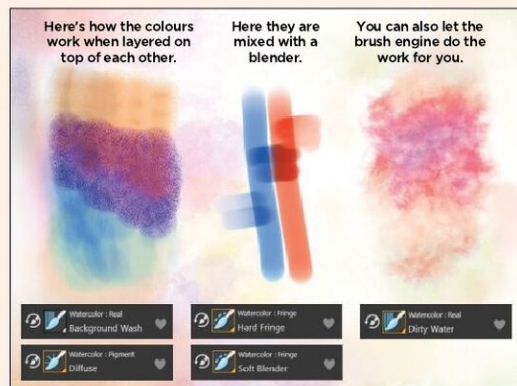
There are diverse tools available that can be used at different stages of your workflow, such as the Background wash for covering larger areas; Fractal Wash and Dirty Water for more expressive coverage and colouring of smaller areas; and brushes for texturing and effects such as Tiger Lily or Dry Splatter.



Overall, these brushes tend to render vibrant colours. Most of them create soft washes, but there are a few that produce a drier effect.



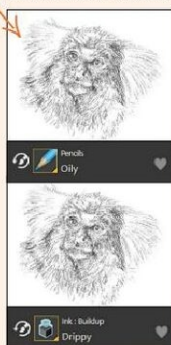
If you like the basics, you may enjoy the Soft and Hard Round brushes.



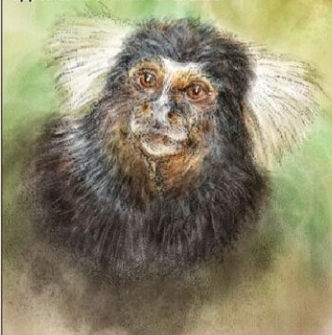
4 Mixing your colours

There are three basic ways to mix colours or create gradients. The first one is to simply have each colour on a separate layer, because the washes are transparent and you can see underlying colours. The second is to use an accessory tool such as a blender or wetting brush, and the third way is to use a tool that already generates gradients within the brush stroke.

This pencil sketch was purposely quite flat in values, in order to build up the value range with the watercolour brushes.



I combined four watercolour brushes across categories for this quick thumbnail sketch and finished it with a touch of white Pencil: Oily to create the highlight in the eyes and giving the appearance of white fur strands.



5 Combine watercolours with pencil and ink

Corel Painter 2022 provides you with plenty of options to choose from in the Inks and Pencils categories, to enhance your drawings, sketches and studies. Here you see two loose thumbnail sketches where I used Pencil: Oily and Ink: Buildup Drizzly.

Photoshop

IMPROVE YOUR BOSS DESIGNS



Tristan Tait takes you through some different processes and design ideas that go into creating a boss character for a 2D indie game

Artist PROFILE

Tristan Tait
LOCATION: Australia

Tristan is an Australian freelance illustrator who enjoys drawing anything that's a little weird and wild.
tristan.tait.net

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!



Every good video game needs a bad guy, and coming up with an engaging boss character can be a fun challenge. They're bigger and meaner than the rest of the game's grunts, and it'll take a bit of work on the player's side to figure out how to beat them. What makes a good boss character though, and what are some of the different ways we can

explore the design to craft and create something memorable?

In his workshop, I'm going to run through a few of the different processes and ideas I explore when designing a boss character for a 2D indie game. I'll also show how it can fit within the development pipeline.

Indie game companies are usually only small teams made up of a few people. As a result, it's pretty common for each member to take

on multiple roles within the development pipeline. For the sake of this workshop I'm going to assume the role of art director, concept designer and character artist... so basically I'm telling myself what to do, laying out ideas and then critiquing my own work! So sit back, grab a pen, and follow along by scribbling up your own cartoon monsters and see what your next boss character could be.

1 Study the brief

Before I start drawing out any old boss character, I need to make sure that it's going to fit into the game world. Our game designer and art director have provided a design brief that gives me a good place to start. I've underlined the important features and taken particular note of the style they need: "Colourful and stylised cartoon". Clearly, my design will need to gel with the rest of the game's aesthetic.

FICTITIOUS GAMES
BOSS CHARACTER DESIGN BRIEF

Colourful and stylised cartoon 2D side scroller, set in a fantasy horror world.

We need a Boss character for the end of the 'Corrupted Swamp' level. We're after a large hulking monster that utilises both ranged and melee attacks. Maybe a projectile or at least a long weapon that reaches a distance. Think sluggish and gross but needs to feel semi-intelligent - it'll be the guardian of the swamp. As for the style, think 'Earthworm Jim', meets 'horror'.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: HARD ROUND INKER

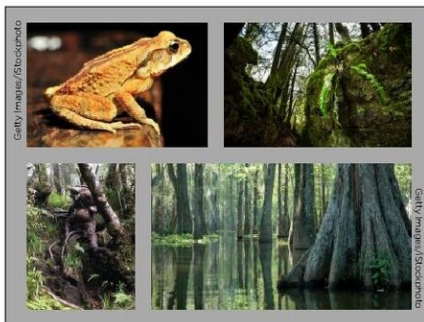
This basic hard Round brush is perfect for blocking in flat colours and inking lines.

TT_MAIN

A bristled brush with Flow and Opacity settings. This is my go-to for most work.

SOFT ROUND 01

A simple Round brush with Opacity and Flow settings. Great for soft blending or effects.



2 Find the mood

With the brief in mind, I start collecting images to build up a mood board. I may not reference these directly in my final design, but I want a reminder of the feel of the environment and general vibe that we're going for. Here I'm feeling lots of gnarled dead trees, warty toads and dark atmospheric swamps.



3 Exploring silhouettes

Next, I start blocking in silhouettes. I'm looking for an interesting and easy-to-read shape that helps show some key physical attributes of our boss. I'm also keeping in mind the other enemies throughout the level. Our boss will need to feel similar yet more important. Maybe it's a beefed-up, or a more intelligent and battle-hardened version - something that shows this character is ranked over the others in one way or another. ➡

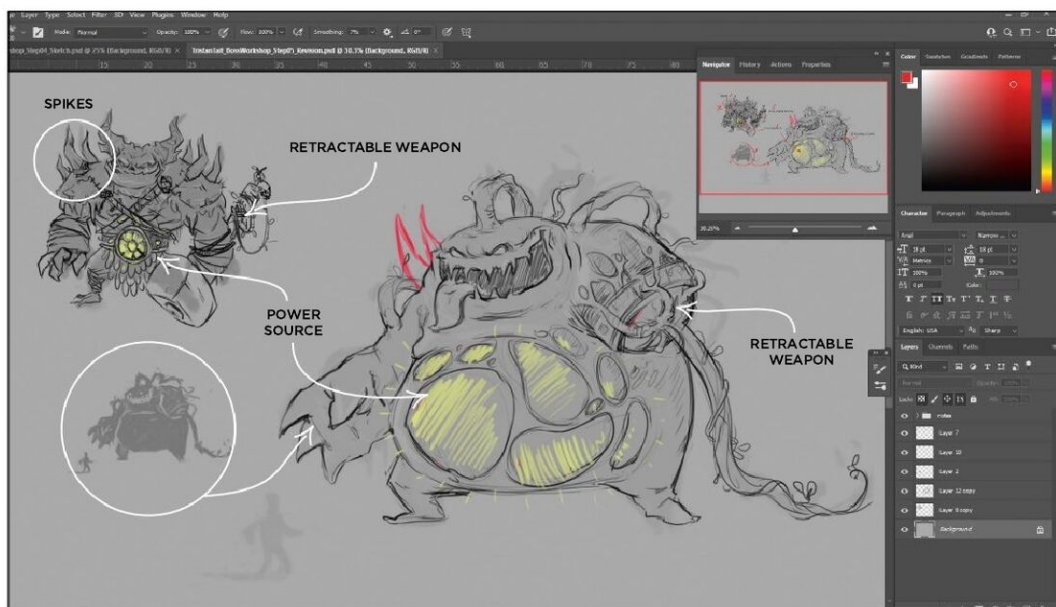
In depth Boss designs





4 Sketch out some details

I feel that the spiky looking guy has a pretty cool shape, so I lower the opacity and start sketching in some details on a new layer to flesh out his design. I've added a few notes to get some key ideas across before showing it to the rest of the team.



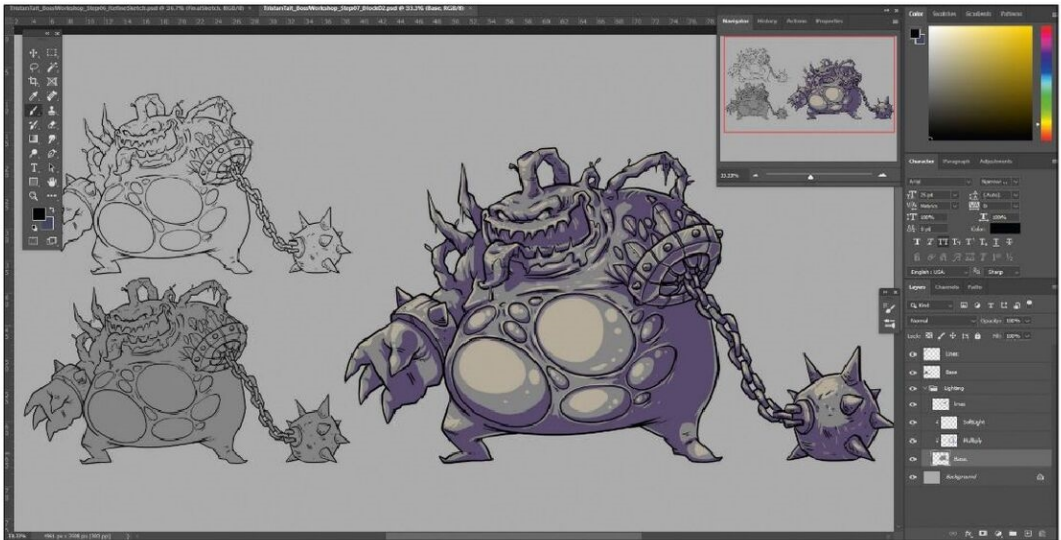
5 Revision and communication

I submit my sketch to the art director and animator to get their thoughts and to see if it works within the context of the game. Turns out they hate it. It's not 'swampy enough' for the level and the animator has pointed out potential issues with his bulky shoulder pads conflicting with his hammer swings. They did like certain aspects though, so I choose another of my silhouettes and build on it with these notes in mind.



6 Refine the sketch

With a newly approved sketch, I build on it while trying to emphasise key visual clues for the player. A boss fight should be a challenge to beat, but not impossible. Visual hints can help prepare the player for what they're up against. Spikes on top? Better not jump on it. Huge claw? Probably going to swipe you with it. Big glowing orb? That's probably important...



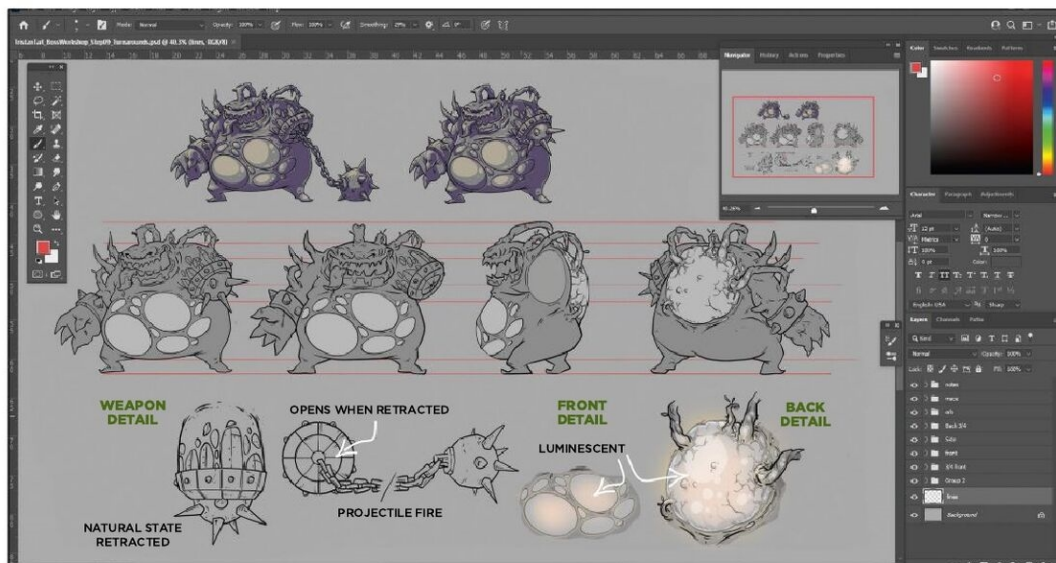
7 Block in the design

Keeping the 2D cartoon style in mind, I cel shade the beast to give it some depth. I create a grey base below my line layer and then use Multiply and Soft Light layers to draw in my shadows and highlights. I do this with the same hard Round inker brush I used for the line-work.



8 Develop variations

Using my greyscale character as a base, I duplicate and paint in some variations to show our team. They want to see how he might look with armour or different attachments, so I experiment a little and end up mashing a few of the ideas into one for the final version. ➡➡



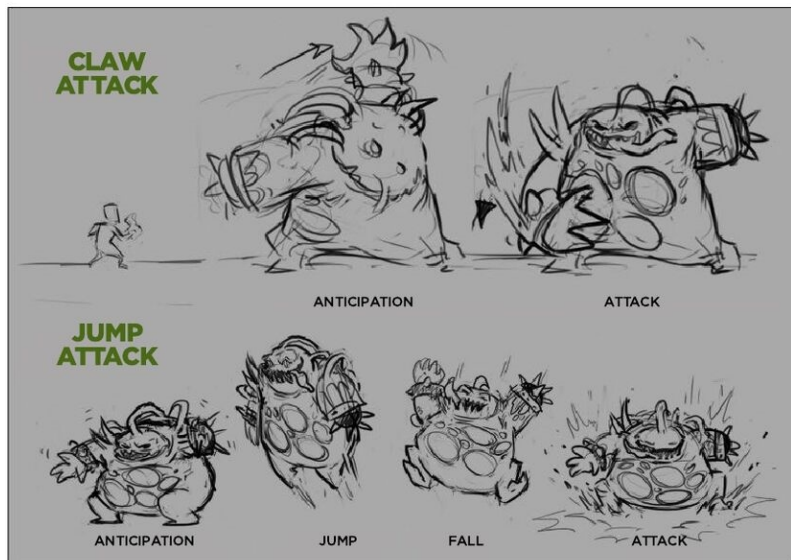
9 Prepare turnarounds for further down the pipeline

Creating a turnaround of the character will help the modeller and animator to see it from every angle, making their job much easier. I'm taking care to point out important features here that must be included in the models. This can then be sent off to the modeller or animator to start building up the base character while we play around with the superficial stuff, such as colours.



10 Colour tests

I'm now overlaying my greyscale image with different colour variations to see what works best. The brighter green one fits the swamp theme most, so we move ahead with that.

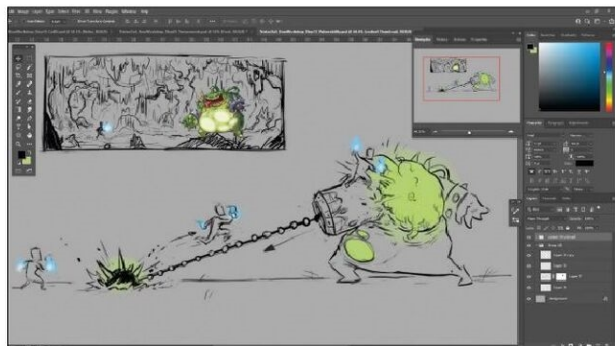
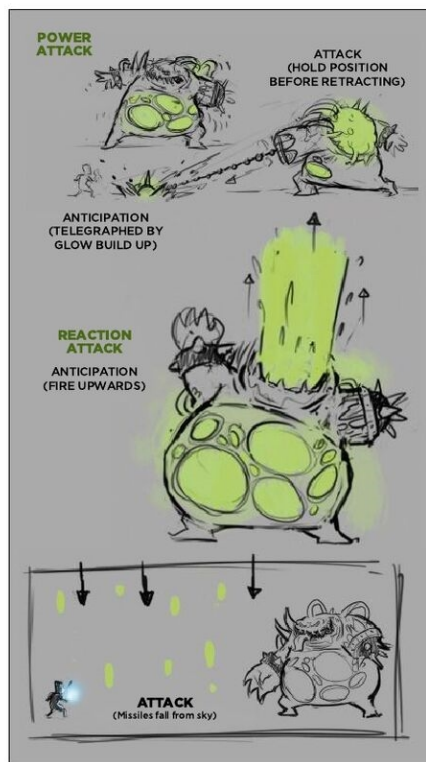


11 Sketch key frames of the boss's attacks

To help the animators, I'm sketching up quick key frames to show the melee attack in action. In this case, if our hero gets too close he's going to be hit with a big ol' claw swing! If he's too far away, he's gonna get jumped on! I recommend creating anticipation phases to help telegraph the boss's movements. The player will have more fun recognising attacks and planning strategy than just being instantly hit.

12 Break down power moves

I want to emphasise the power of the special attacks and so I use a glow in the power source to 'charge up' the moves. Here we have our projectile chain strike and a fun vomit reaction attack. The chain attack is going to be his power move and so I emphasise the glowing power source in this sketch. This will act as a telegraph for the player to prepare for their counter.



13 Visualise vulnerabilities

Your boss character can't be invincible, so it's always good to think of their weaknesses and find ways to show that in their design. To make it a bit of a challenge, I hide his only weak spot on his back. The only time you can see it is after his chain strike. The hero must run along the chain while it's lodged in the ground to attack. A successful strike will then throw the hero off and trigger the reaction attack that the hero needs to dodge.



14 Health states and phases

A fun part of a boss fight is the build up of tension as you get closer to winning. This can be done a few different ways, and in this case I represent it visually with a colour change in his power source. You know when he's in the red phase that you're close to winning the fight! This could also be emphasised by speeding up his actions to create more intensity.



15 Draw a key frame sequence to depict defeat

One last set of key frames to help the animator will be for our big dramatic death scene. Keeping in line with his design and the cartoon vibe we have, I think a fun way to send him off would be to extend his reaction attack and have him expel his entire power source until he deflates like an empty sack. And there it is: a bunch of things to play around with when creating your next boss character! Hope you had fun!



Photoshop

SET UP A MODULAR ART WORKFLOW

Get more from what you already have, says **Thomas Scholes** who's keen for you to waste nothing and learn more... and faster!



**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**
See page 6 now!

Artist PROFILE

**Thomas
Scholes**
LOCATION: US

Thomas works in
concept art and visual/
creative development,
specialising in creating
environments and
pre-production projects.
artofthescholes.com



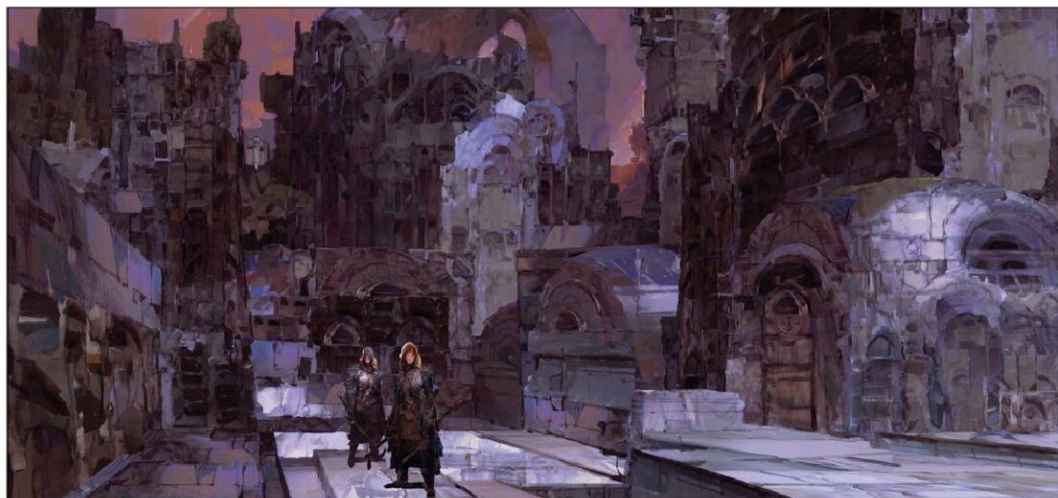
Kitbashing is a technique that uses existing parts, art or assets to make or improve new designs.

The technique has a long history in the creative industries, starting with the extensive use of physical model kits – trains, tanks and so on – in landmark sci-fi films such as *Star Wars*, and has a mindset that's well suited to asset and texture reuse in digital film and games.

Rather than borrow from others to make our kits, we'll be borrowing from our own work and relying on our taste and instinct for interest with a method I'm calling a quick-kit. This method is a great way to jump into making and using kits, but also faster and closer to sketching than other modular methods. I think you'll find the freedom enjoyable and the process easier to learn! We'll be taking the best parts of existing work, preparing

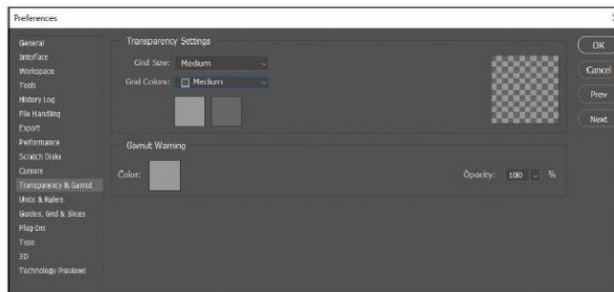
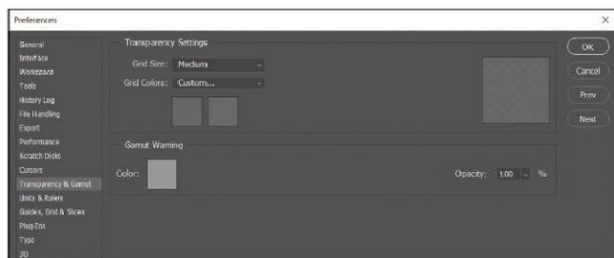
them for use and then testing the kit in the creation of a new image.

Conservation and motivation is vital to every artist whether they're a pro or just starting out, so it's great to be able to recoup as much spent energy as you can and turn it into new work and new progress. I'm sure you have a hard drive or closet full of sketches with loads of potential just waiting to be remembered, so after you absorb this tutorial I hope you gather them up and get busy! ➤



1 Reuse past artworks

When creating kits I especially enjoy sampling from dead-end or stalled-out sketches. Often with clients I'll use some of the initial sketches that have gone through the approval process and will use this method as an opportunity to incorporate feedback while iterating quickly. This time I'm going to be using just one personal painting that I want to explore further. I'll remove some of the final colour edits for a more versatile neutral tone, and take out the characters to make selecting the environment easier.



3 Find your favourites

Gravitate towards the most interesting elements, whatever catches your eye. Copy, paste and fill two-thirds of your page with the best bits. Since it's hard to predict how useful each piece will be, the Quick Selection tool is a great option here for efficiency. Its selections can be a bit rough, but a little less precision can often provide happy accidents. However, for some of these initial and specific selections I'm going to use the Polygonal Lasso tool because a lot of what I want here is rectangular or straight edged. Switch between the Polygonal and normal Lasso tool to quickly get some of the irregular and finer detail out of these shapes.

2 New canvas, new kit

Ensure the resolution for your kit's canvas is larger than your source painting: big enough to store your kit pieces at the full resolution with extra pixel-padding around it so that it's easy to reselect later. You'll want to work with a transparent background, so delete the default filled Background layer. If you haven't already, consider lowering the contrast of your transparency grid via Preferences to save your eyes some strain and allow your visual taste to better engage.



4 Be mindful about your selection of shapes

Grab big, medium and small shapes. Be sure to select some rest/less-interesting areas and take a chance to be surprised with a few bits and pieces that might not work out. Often these can be the most useful and can open you up to greater possibilities within the technique. Fill your new Canvas like you would a loose sketchbook page. Leave no large empty spaces and have fun filling in the gaps. Respond to what's already on the page and try to complement it. I suggest using the negative space as inspiration for what to grab next.

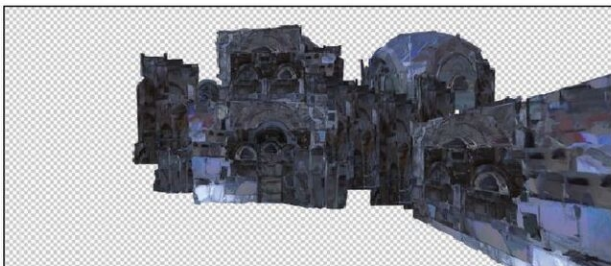
5 Strategies within strategies

This is a great task to do as a warm-up or cool-down exercise, or in those spare moments just before meetings. Often it's a task that I leave until the end of the day – not just because I don't have the energy to think, but it's also a great way to motivate yourself to get to work the next day to see what you can do with your new kit!



6 Time to play with your new kit

Grab your favourite piece out of your new kit and explore its potential in a new canvas. Use this piece as the keystone to continue creating whether it becomes the focal point or serves as a temporary catalyst. Try building a pattern with this main piece or with a supporting piece. Transform some pieces into floor or ceiling panels, expand a small piece 100 times, to use in the sky. Think less and play more, and treat play as the ultimate form of learning. I try to make as much time as I can for this stage because I find it helps me avoid the cliché – providing the client with something truly unique and interesting and helping me find something to keep me motivated on some of the tougher jobs and throughout my career.



7 Focus on progress

Generally, I like to work on whatever bothers me the most or wherever the biggest issue is, and this enables me to work as efficiently as possible. Once the big issues are taken care of I'll move on to gradually smaller issues until they're just not worth the investment of my time just to make the painting one per cent better. Why waste time for one or two per cent when I could do another painting that can expand the concept, show it from a different angle or another part of the world or iterate towards a different direction. ➡



8 Be sure to know when to stop

I know I'm done when, at this final stage, 20 minutes have passed and the image has either not improved or become worse. It wasn't too long ago that I was much more of a perfectionist; that each image needed to be pushed as far as it possibly could. I do think there's some benefit from doing so occasionally but there's a real

danger of burnout from this mentality. It still feels a bit odd to say this but I think 80 per cent finished is better than 110 per cent. Leaving that 20-30 per cent buffer makes sure that you have the energy and motivation for revisions, iterations or to better weather the cancellation of the task altogether. Slow and steady wins the race, so please be strategic about your energy. Pace yourself and invest wisely.



9 Focus on the future

To help keep myself from overworking an image I'll have multiple images on the go. The urge to invest in detail and ever-diminishing returns is easier to resist when there's another project that can benefit much more from the same amount of time.

10 Character for scale, kits within kits

Now that the architectural concept is stable I'm going to borrow some characters, a background and some props to take the image further. I'm borrowing from one of my character kits to add a character for scale and to act as avatar for the viewer. It'll also serve as additional visual interest and psychological contrast of organic versus inorganic. Much like the characters, I'm going to borrow from a generic prop kit I created previously. In addition to enriching the setting, these props will also help create some additional focal points and areas of interest.



11 Giving the scene added depth

For the background I've been enjoying the depth you can get out of reusing a previous illustration. I've decided to reuse this city scene for the background because of the incredible amount of depth that it gave and because the architecture and perspective fit the scene very well. Finding the right home for something that you already have really agrees with a mentality of not just efficiency but conservation. Whether it's the client's budget or your energy or your motivation, I think it's essential to invest wisely.



12 Refine, recycle, repeat

Consider creating a new kit from your new sketches and gradually evolving your kit over time into a fuller modular set that suits your painting techniques. Copy any updated props or characters into their own kits and enjoy not only reusing your efforts, but being able to take your ideas and images further and further as you create more and more. ●

Infinite Painter

SPEEDPAINT A MECH DESIGN



Kobe Sek shares his process of sketching mechs with negative space, creating a vibrant and colourful concept

Artist PROFILE

Kobe Sek

LOCATION: Singapore

Kobe is an art director at Ubisoft Singapore, with 12 years of game development experience. He's worked on Assassin's Creed, Ghost Recon and Prince of Persia, and loves mechs, cyberpunk and painting with colour. artstation.com/kobesek



Playing with shapes, colour and lighting is like meditating. So I often carry my iPad with me and take inspiration from everywhere. I look around and figure out what's worth "stealing". It can be a question that occurs to me, an event, eating food, and so on. Ideas are everywhere. I believe that nothing's new. Everything is about copying, combining and transforming.

I love cyberpunk, but not the gloomy part. As technology plays an increasingly significant role in our lives, I always wonder how humans interact with AI, robots and mechs.

This genre enables me to imagine and express mechanical shapes, experiment with the big, medium and small forms, and paint colourful elements such as neon signboards and hologram advertisements.

For this workshop, I'll explain my process from doodling to concept

design, how I made decisions, and how the plan evolved along the process. I spent around four hours on this and mainly focused on the overall shapes, colour and lighting.

I doodle thumbnails with negative space, sometimes colour blocking. I use colour picking from references and reuse my existing artwork with clipping masks to create the base colour and lighting. Occasionally, I'll photo-bash elements if required. More details in the steps below...

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

INFINITE PAINTER

DEFAULT BRUSHES:
SOLID FILL BRUSH

This brush is similar to the Lasso tool in Photoshop, but fills in colour automatically.

ROUND BRUSH

A basic default brush that I use for refining detail and scribbles.

PAINT ROLLER

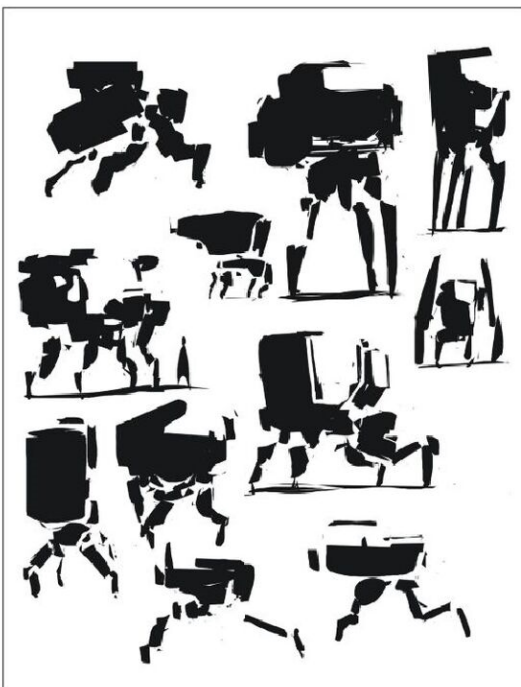
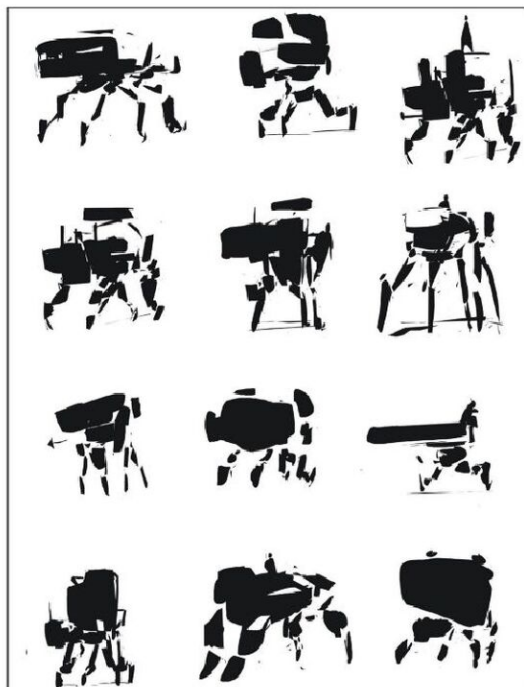
Another default blending painting brush - good for using as a smudge tool.



1 Doodle with negative space

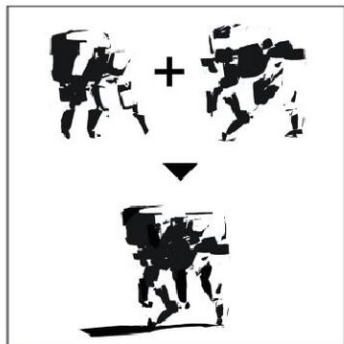
This is my default method of exploring shapes. This is a fun way to stay loose and abstract. I can play around with big, medium and small shapes while keeping the composition and basic functionality in mind. I'm always fascinated by how many ideas we can extract from just observing the negative space of a subject. ➡





2 Spend between one and three minutes exploring shapes

I struggled with the first batches of thumbnails, which were too rigid or similar to my previous design. It's crucial to stay away from details, and instead focus on the overall silhouette. Only spend a short amount of time drawing each thumbnail, before moving on to the next one. Don't get attached to one idea too early. You can always go back to develop them further.



3 Mix and match

After I have a decent amount of sketches, I mix and match the thumbnails to generate more designs. The good thing about thumbnails is that it's easy to combine them without worrying about the lighting, scale, perspective and details. For example, I mix two thumbnails above, resulting in a design that I'm keen to move forward.



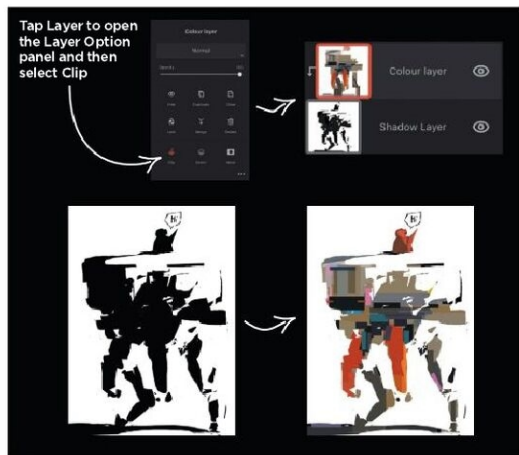
4 Add scale references

After picking the design, I add elements that convey basic storytelling. For example, a mech can exist at a range of sizes. It's difficult for the audience to understand the structure, so it's essential to have something on show that enables the viewer to relate to your creation. Here, I put a character in for scale reference and justify the primary function.



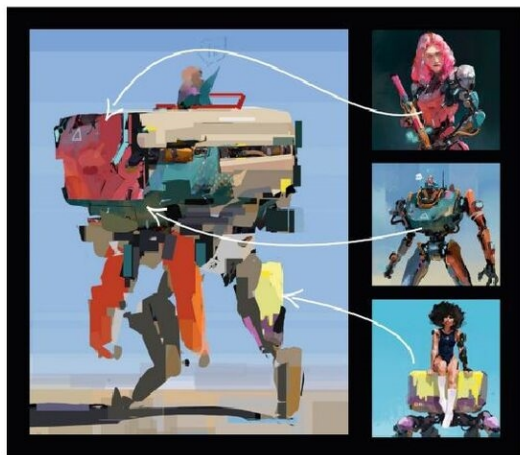
5 Set up value layers

I add a background and highlight layer, and these layers play a big part in the colour exploration. In this phase, I always keep a maximum of three layers: background, shadow and light. Once these layers are in place, I can use them as clipping masks to explore different colours within the shapes.



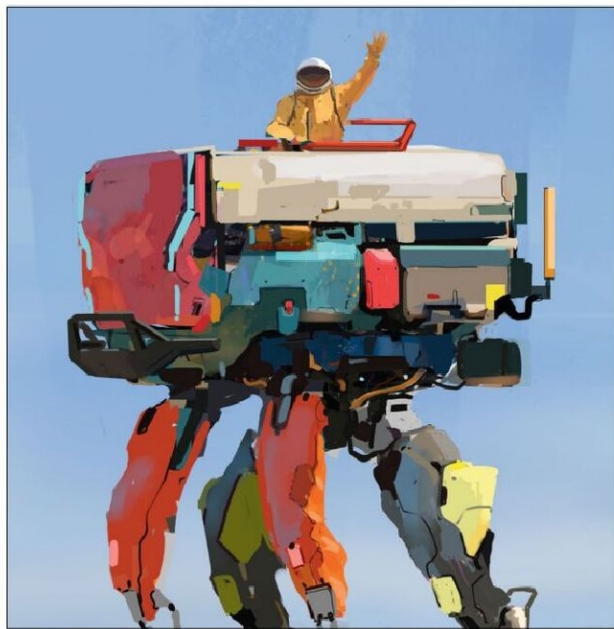
6 Clipping Mask colour layer

The clipping mask is a non-destructive method that enables you to explore the colour within the pixels in the layer. For example, I want to colour my shadow layer, so I create a new layer above it and tap Layer to open the Layer Option dialog. Then I select Clip. Now, whatever colour I paint will only appear within the shadow parts.



7 Reuse existing artworks

I continue exploring possible colours. Besides colour picking from references that I find online, such as a colourful vehicle or some 80s/90s electronic devices, I often reuse old artworks with the Clipping Mask method. That's why sometimes my colour can go a bit out of control, and sometimes it gives me a happy accident.



8 Refine overall shapes and details

After the colour stage, I start refining the silhouette, edges and form. First, I ensure the mech's body and limbs have enough negative space for readability. Next, I refine the character with a yellow spacesuit to help them stand out from the background. I also add panelling lines to the mech to suggest a logical structure.



9 Apply decals and boost storytelling

The final phase is always fun and relaxing, as I place interesting stickers on the mech. I also add little lights here and there or a random graphic hologram that looks like a control panel around the character, to boost the sense of storytelling. Sometimes I spend a lot of time finding the right words to use as a decal.

GET **IMAGINEFX** DELIVERED DIGITALLY!



iPad is a trademark of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc.

Available via our online shop

www.magazinesdirect.com/imaginefx-magazine

Available on iOS or Android



IMAGINEFX

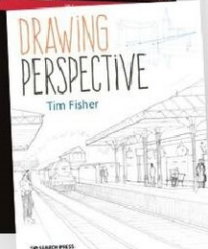
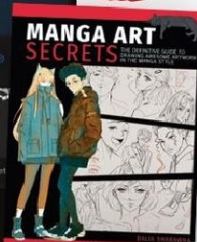
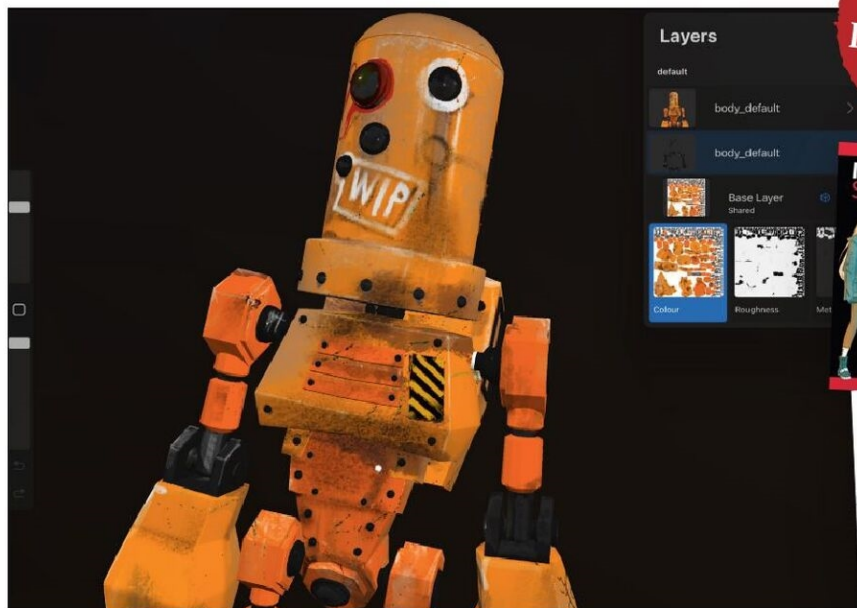
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



Artist's Choice Award
Art resources with a five-star rating receive the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...

**5
PRODUCTS
ON TEST**



SOFTWARE

82 Procreate 5.2

The accomplished painting app now has the ability to work with 3D models.

83 ZBrush Core Mini

Get a taste of what the established 3D tool ZBrush can offer – and all for free!

84 ArtRage Vitae

The original digital painting app gets a make-over for Windows.



BOOKS

85 Manga Art Secrets

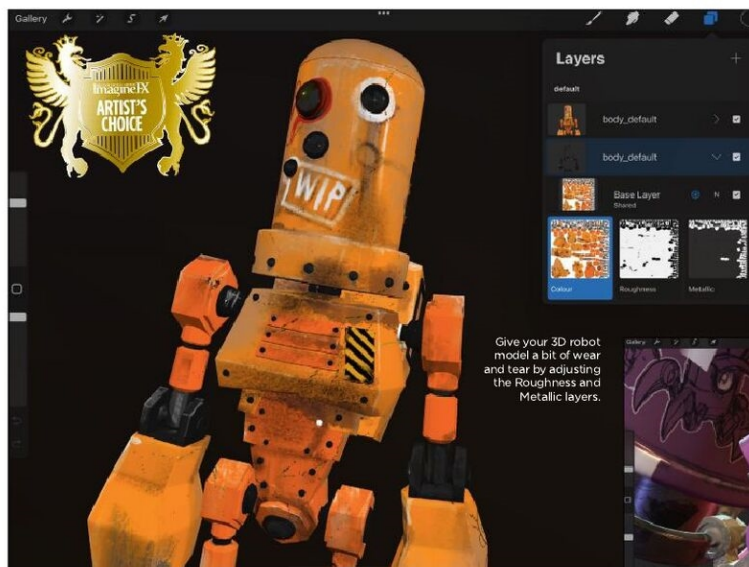
With 10 years' drawing experience, this artist is keen to pass on what she's learned.



85 Drawing Perspective

Perspective is a key plank of an artist's skillset. This book will get you up to speed.

RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ Magnificent ★★★★★ Great ★★★★★ Good ★★ Poor ★ Atrocious

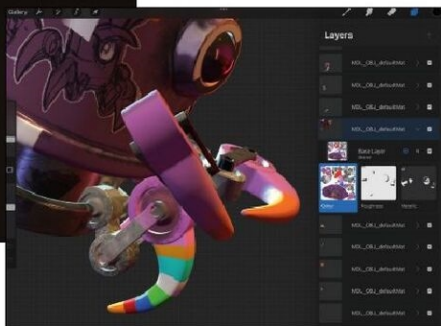


Give your 3D robot model a bit of wear and tear by adjusting the Roughness and Metallic layers.

You can import a couple of popular file formats, but you can export a lot more – including both your 3D models and the textures that you've painted.



If you're already familiar with Procreate then you can use the 3D features. The layers engine is exactly the same, with some additions.



Artwork by Ryan Statham

Procreate 5.2

ANOTHER DIMENSION The accomplished painting app has taken its first step into a larger world, with the ability to work with 3D models. We assess the results

Price £8.99 **Company** Savage Interactive **Web** procreate.art

Procreate was first released in March 2011 and was the first pro-level drawing app that really grabbed people's attention on the iPad. Fast forward to November 2021 and we now have Procreate 5.2. It's an amazing update in lots of ways, but the biggest addition is the ability to take 3D models and use all the Procreate brushes and effects right there on the model.

Procreate comes with a few 3D samples that enable you to get going the second you download the app, but the real power comes when you take your own models from programs such as ZBrush, Blender, Maya and even models created on the iPad with apps like Nomad Sculpt and Forger. Models have to be unwrapped and

have UV coordinates, which is how textures are applied to models in 3D.

There's one fly in the ointment for iPad sculptors: there aren't many options for creating UV coordinates on an iPad (Forger has some basic tools) and so you have to resort to a desktop program such as Blender to generate them.

PAINTING IN 3D

The 3D painting process is easy to grasp. In fact, as long as you already know how to use Procreate then there isn't much to learn. You import the model you want to paint. It has layers in the same way a flat image does. If the model has separate parts you can tap the part you want to paint on, and away you go. There are sub-layers for establishing roughness and how

metallic the object should appear, which makes it possible to enhance your painting with reflectivity.

There's also a new 3D tab that gives you access to lighting and the environment. You can add new lights, colour them and alter the HDRI (backgrounds that will reflect in your model). You can use any Procreate brush or feature, and so tools such as Smudge are great for mixing up the paint that's already on the model. There is an option to see your texture

Savage has added an AR feature that enables you to show your painted 3D creation in the real world right there on your desk!



“An amazing new feature is that you can view your model at your desk using an AR feature right there in Procreate”



flattened out. This means you can also bring in other images or textures and add them via your usual 2D workflow.

AUGMENTED REALITY

An amazing new feature is that you can view your model at your desk using an AR feature right there in Procreate. This shows where digital art is heading and it's fantastic that Savage has added this feature to this update. Being able to check out your designs in the very room you're working in is liberating. It won't be long before we see some exciting things created with this update.

The non-3D additions include a much-improved stroke stabilisation feature for when you're creating your own brushes. If you're lucky enough to have a 16GB iPad Pro you can now take advantage of larger documents and even more layers. There's a new Page Assist feature that enables you to view all of your sketch ideas in a convenient sketchbook format, which is fantastic news for storyboard artists and comic book illustrators. Finally, you can bring in PDFs and annotate them, which widens the app's appeal.

It would have been nice to get some automated UVing tools to make it easy to import any model, but we're sure there'll be future updates that will support Procreate's impressive step into the 3D realm. ●

The Page assist feature means that you can bring in and view your PDFs and read them like a comic.

DETAILS

Features

- New 3D painting workflow and tools
- Able to paint with colour, reflectivity and metallics
- HDRI backgrounds
- Example 3D models
- Page Assist feature for PDF
- Quick menu gestures
- Recent brush memory
- More languages
- Augmented reality viewer for your models
- M1 iPads can handle larger documents that feature more layers

System

- Requirements
- iPad: Fifth gen iPad or newer; second gen iPad Air or newer; fourth gen iPad mini or newer; iPad Pro

Rating



ZBrushCoreMini

MINI ME Get a taste of what the established 3D tool ZBrush can offer, without paying a penny

Price Free

Company Pixologic

Web pixologic.com

RATING ★★★★★

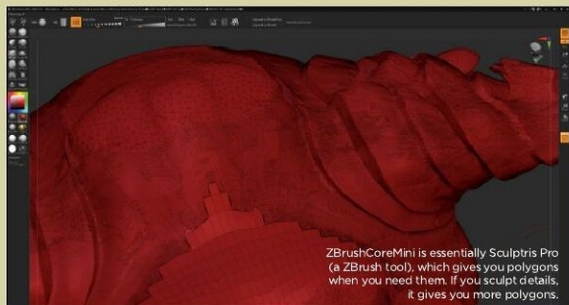
ZBrush comes in three flavours: ZBrushCoreMini, ZBrushCore and the full ZBrush. The upgrade path is clear and it starts with the free version that we're reviewing here.

The first thing to note is that this version has a limited toolset. But that's intentional: ZBrushCoreMini is designed to give you a taster of working in 3D, without worrying about any heavy-hitting features.

You can only sculpt, and you can only do one type of sculpting called dynamic tessellation. The full version of this tool in ZBrush is called Sculptis Pro and it basically gives you extra geometry (triangles)

where you need it as you sculpt. If you add creases, it gives you more triangles. If you smooth an area, it takes them away. It's a well-used technique in lots of 3D software and even in VR with programs such as ShapeLab VR. It's perfect for this free release because it's aimed at people who haven't done this before and may not even know what 'this' is. They can just sculpt and make something cool, and that's sometimes enough. In a recent update the program received new Chisel Brushes that effectively give you stamps, enabling you to add scales, noses, claws and so on by dragging on the surface of a model.

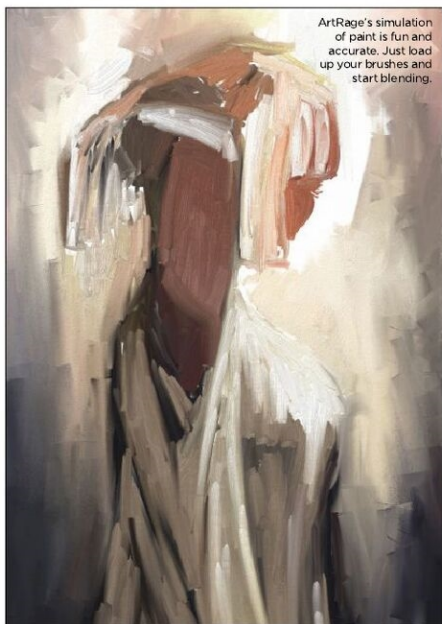
ZBrushCoreMini has a limited material set, all the basic brushes you get in ZBrush, and features like symmetry and occlusion. It's a great way to start your ZBrush journey.



The tools may seem simple, but behind the scenes there are plenty of options to tailor and tinker with brushes, paint flow and colour.



The new PaintLink feature enables you and a friend to share and collaborate on the same canvas.



ArtRage's simulation of paint is fun and accurate. Just load up your brushes and start blending.

ArtRage Vitae: Ambient Design

ArtRage Vitae

A NEW LIFE? The original digital painting app gets an update to perform better on desktop. Is this a stroke of painterly genius?

Price £80 **Format** Windows reviewed (also on Mac, Android and iOS) **Company** Ambient Design **Web** artrage.com

Long before Procreate was turning heads, ArtRage was the go-to app for on-the-go digital artists. The iPad edition, released in 2004, was perfectly designed for tablets.

Running ArtRage on Windows 11 is a smooth experience. Some may criticise the chunky UI that hasn't really changed since the iPad release, but there's a homely, robust feel to ArtRage Vitae. In fact, many of the new features are behind-the-scenes additions designed to bring the software up to date without compromising its famed ease of use.

For example, the new PaintLink feature enables you and a friend to collaborate on the same painting in

real time. You can also share your preferences, tools and colour palettes with a friend. Combined with the tiled-canvas feature – paint seamlessly across canvas edges to create infinite paintings or textures – and there's a welcome pro edge to Vitae.

NEW STROKES

Yet ArtRage's real joy comes on the canvas, and here Vitae is refined rather than overhauled. The standard brushes include oils, watercolour and airbrush, along with a lovely palette knife that demands to be toyed with.

ArtRage's strength is that it enables you to load the canvas and brush with thick paint and just play – smearing, pushing, and blending to create

textured artworks. In Vitae this is smoother than ever, even on a tablet.

Helping is a variety of colour picker options, from traditional artist colours to a neat wheel that sits in the corner. Vitae adds a new Complementary Color Picker that, as the name suggests, offers colours that suit your palette. Everything can be saved into customised colour-mixing resources, to create a menu of blending profiles.

Outside of these features Vitae feels more of an update than a new version. A clear effort has been made to set up ArtRage for a more professional environment, particularly as canvas sizes can now go as large as 32,500x32,500 pixels in size with faster saving, fewer crashes and more recording options to share your process.

This is one of the most accessible painting tools around, with a wealth of existing features and refinements added with Vitae. If you left ArtRage, it's time to come back.

DETAILS

Features

- New PaintLink canvas sharing
- Improved Color Picker and colour customisation
- Tiled Canvas feature for limitless extended canvas and textures
- Improved saving and stabilisation
- Larger canvas size (32,500x32,500 pixels)

System Requirements

PC: Windows 10 and above, **Mac:** OS X 10.10 or better, 1024x1080 or higher screen resolution, 8GB RAM, 64-bit CPU, graphics tablet or stylus input

Rating

★★★★☆

“Everything can be saved into customised colour-mixing resources, to create a menu of blending profiles”

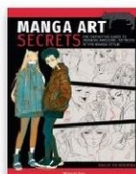
Manga Art Secrets

IN THE KNOW With 10 years' drawing experience, this artist is keen to pass on what she's learned in this detailed instructional guide

Author Dalia Sharawna **Publisher** Search Press **Price** £13 **Web** searchpress.com **Available** Now

While Dalia Sharawna's book may not have "everything you need to become a manga artist," as its back cover promises, the Palestine artist's guide does discuss core manga character design over its 130 pages.

Dalia's guide covers heads, bodies and poses, before exploring clothing and aging. The advice comes in the form of step by steps, expanded explanations on a particular feature,



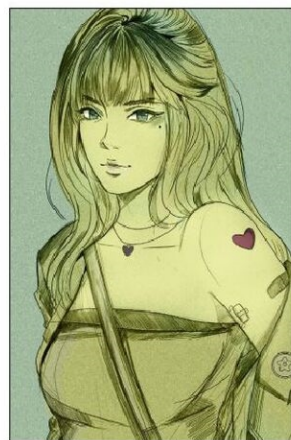
Artist Dalia Sharawna furnishes her characters with accessories to help bring them to life.

and the artist's manga art secrets. The latter are Dalia's observations on working in the genre, accompanied by examples of her own art. The book also features four spreads on other manga artists, for extra visual interest.

Readers will need a solid grasp of figure art to get the most from Dalia's detailed teachings. Furthermore, her book lacks insights into how to develop a polished manga character. Line-weight and colour are only lightly touched on, and there's no advice on how to push storytelling into manga's often fantastical realm.

Manga Art Secrets features useful advice on drawing workaday manga characters, but you'll have to put the time in to enhance your designs with the genre's distinctive art language.

RATING ★★☆☆☆



Dalia prefers to give her female characters more nuanced expressions, while still conveying emotion.

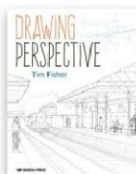
Drawing Perspective

GET SOME Perspective is a key plank of an artist's skillset, but it can be a hard concept to grasp. This book will get you up to speed

Author Tim Fisher **Publisher** Search Press **Price** £13 **Web** searchpress.com **Available** Now

Artist, author and art tutor Tim Fisher's book aims to "help you see and understand the world, and how perspective in its many forms has an influence on it." It certainly delivers on this promise.

Tim doesn't tackle perspective immediately. Instead, he provides a breakdown of core drawing materials, surfaces and tools such as compasses and T-squares. This is followed by a



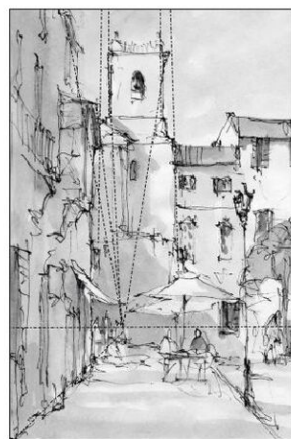
Tim Fisher's single-point perspective exercise is based on a Philadelphia street.

chapter on drawing techniques. You'll learn how to make a tonal scale, the best way to sharpen and hold a pencil, and generating tone and texture.

Then it's on to perspective proper. Tim provides insights on zero-, one-, two- and multi-point perspective. Topics are covered in-depth and with a matter-of-fact tone, while always referring to his hand-drawn visuals. The artist steps up a gear with sections that include varying perspective, shadows and placing animals in a scene. If the theory threatens to get too technical, step-by-step exercises take the reader through the practical application of Tim's art knowledge.

If you're looking for expert advice on how to draw what you see, follow the lines to this book.

RATING ★★★★★



There are two vanishing points in Tim's drawing: one at the base of the tower; and one far above it.



SPORT



TECH



The Perfect Christmas Gift from just £6



MUSIC



HOBBIES

SUBSCRIBE NOW

- Give the gift that keeps on delivering
- Over 80 magazines to choose from
- Free delivery straight to your door

SAVE
UP TO
41%

www.magazinesdirect.com/xm21

Terms and conditions: Offer closes 31/12/2021. Savings are based on the newsstand cover price. Please allow up to six weeks for delivery of your first subscription issue in the UK, and up to 8 weeks for overseas. All gift subscriptions will start post-Christmas with the next available issue. Payment is non-refundable after the 14 day cancellation period unless exceptional circumstances apply. For full terms and conditions, visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. For enquiries please email help@magazinesdirect.com.

Workshops assets are available...

If you see the video workshop badge then you can watch the artist in action. Turn to page 6 to see how you can get hold of the video.

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists



This issue:

88 Traditional FXPosé

Discover this month's selection of the finest traditional art, which has been sent in by you!

92 Workshop: Paint a portrait – Part 2: Sketching

See how Patrick J Jones directs a photoshoot and draws a sketch in preparation for his painting.

98 First Impressions: Erik Krenz

Discover how nature has inspired this US-based illustrator.



FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Michael Camarra

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Acrylic on wood panel WEB: mdcamarra.com

Fine artist Michael uses figures and a vibrant colour palette to explore his fascination with mythology, in the context of humanity's connection with nature.



1 STARGAZERS

"I love playing with vision and the unseen as a theme in my work. This piece puts that together along with our place in the cosmos."



2 TEKHNE'S SONG

"This piece was about the art of art. Here I have a reimagining of Tekhne, which is the muse/spirit of visual art and technical craft/skill."

3 ORACLE

"I think about the consumer waste we have that will outlive us. Here I'm trying to weave our contemporary clutter with a sense of mysticism."

4 ARIADNE & ASTERION

"Here I was reimagining the story of the minotaur (Asterion) and Ariadne. I wanted to make the minotaur a construction of different objects."





Chris Panatier

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Pencil, Ink, Watercolour WEB: chrispanatier.com

Chris is an artist and science fiction and fantasy writer. His ink and watercolour work graces book and album covers. If he isn't telling a story with words then he likes to convey one with a single image.

1 GAUNTLET OF DEATH'S INERTIA

"This piece features the God of Death, and her inexorable power. Death can't be stopped. Album art for the band Desolated."

2 LUCIFER

"This was a personal piece depicting Lucifer not as a disgraced fallen angel, but a martyred one. It's a pro-secular humanist piece and anti-religion."



3 COMMUNION

"This piece addresses the transfer of death to the living. As I view this transition as a beautiful part of the cycle, it's done in verdant surroundings. Album art for Desolated."

4 LORDS OF THE TROPHIC CASCADE

"An environmental theme here. As in ecology, if all of the apex predators are extinguished, the entire ecosystem can fail. Album art for Totem Skin."





Pencil Charcoal

PAINT A PORTRAIT – PART 2: SKETCHING

In this workshop **PATRICK J JONES** directs a photoshoot and draws a detailed sketch in preparation for his oil painting, *The Martian Queen*

Today I'll hire and photograph a live model before working on a detailed sketch and transferring it onto canvas.

If the Old Masters owned cameras they would have used them. Yet I doubt if they would have given up using live models altogether, as I haven't, and I have the choice.

To a beginner it may seem pointless to draw from a live model when we can easily use photography. After all, the photograph doesn't move. However, it doesn't outweigh the advantage of seeing the model in three dimensions.

“I'll paint this artwork within a week to 12 days if all goes well”



MATERIALS

DRAWING TOOLS

- General's Soft Charcoal pencil
 - 9B woodless graphite pencil
 - Tracing paper
 - Paper stumps
 - Tissue
 - Kneadable eraser
 - Newsprint
- #### DIGITAL TOOLS
- Photoshop
 - Canon 5Ds Eos camera
 - 50mm Sigma Art lens

The information in a photograph is flawed compared to the information we see when drawing from life. What the photo severely lacks is the third dimension of depth.

THE VALUE OF DEPTH

The reason for this is its singular lens. The reason we have two eyes instead of one is to enable us to see depth. Each eye judges a separate distance and combines both distances into depth. In simple terms we can see around corners to some degree. The cyclopic camera sees no depth; everything is based on a flat two-dimensional plane of vision. The focal length of the camera can blur the background, but it's simply a carnival trick compared to the human eye's ability to see depth.

The reason the Old Master paintings are so lifelike is that they worked from life until the event of the camera obscura. Once artists

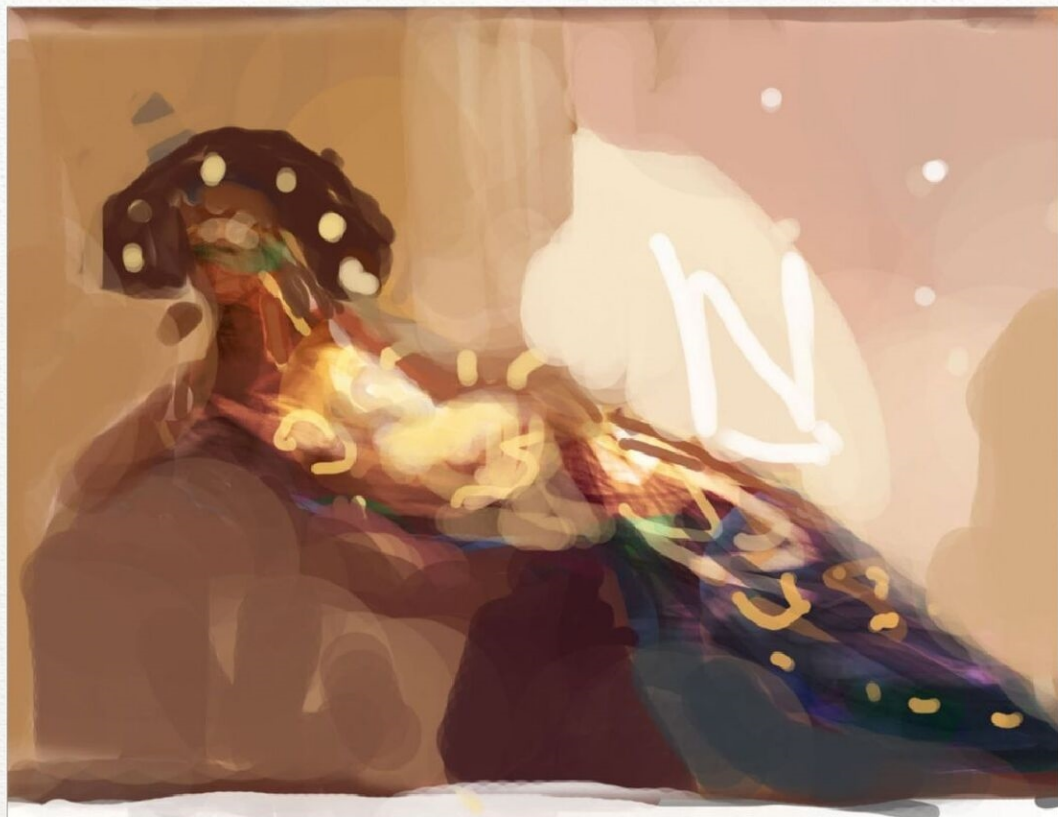
started working from photographs, the world of art slowly became a flatter experience.

That said, I'll work from photography for the most part, because working from a model today is practically impossible as far as cost goes, and the time scale expected for a painting to be completed is less leisurely. The Old Masters would spend anything from a month to a year on a painting. I'll paint this artwork within a week to 12 days if all goes well. So as not to fall into the trap of copying a photo with all its flaws and distortions, I'll first draw from the live model. Let's get to it...



*Patrick is the author of the bestselling books, **The Anatomy of Style, The Sci-fi & Fantasy Techniques of***

Patrick J. Jones and Oil Painting Masterclass. He also teaches figure drawing classes online. You can see more of his work at pjtartworks.com.



1 *Identifying motivation and generating emotion*

It's the day of the photoshoot and I have my colour comp from last issue's Part 1 of this series from which to pose my model, Katy. It has everything I need to go straight to the shoot, but rather than mechanically pose Katy we discuss motivation first to create a natural pose.



2 *Exploring ideas of seduction and sorcery*

Having worked with Katy for years, she knows how I work and falls into character based on the backstory of a Martian queen searching for a mate. We explore ideas of seduction and sorcery, keeping in mind our queen is confident on the outside but sad on the inside. ➤➤



3 *A supremely talented collaborator*

Having explored the emotion of the character, Katy is now moving and thinking like a Martian queen. Having an accomplished artistic collaborator pose for the queen is half the art and is the reason artists of the past are so strongly linked to their models in the pages of history.



4 *The power of backstory*

Now we come to the pose based on the comp and all is well, but if we had gone straight to this pose without our emotional explorations Katy would be no more than a posed mannequin. The power of backstory is now imbued in Katy's face and in the languid expression of every muscle.



5 *The preliminary sketch*

There are two kinds of sketches; preliminary sketches, and the working sketch, which is the final drawing I transfer onto canvas. Here I'm drawing live from the model to feel the gesture. Gesture is the flow of the form and will breathe life into a pose. Without gesture the figure becomes stiff and lifeless.



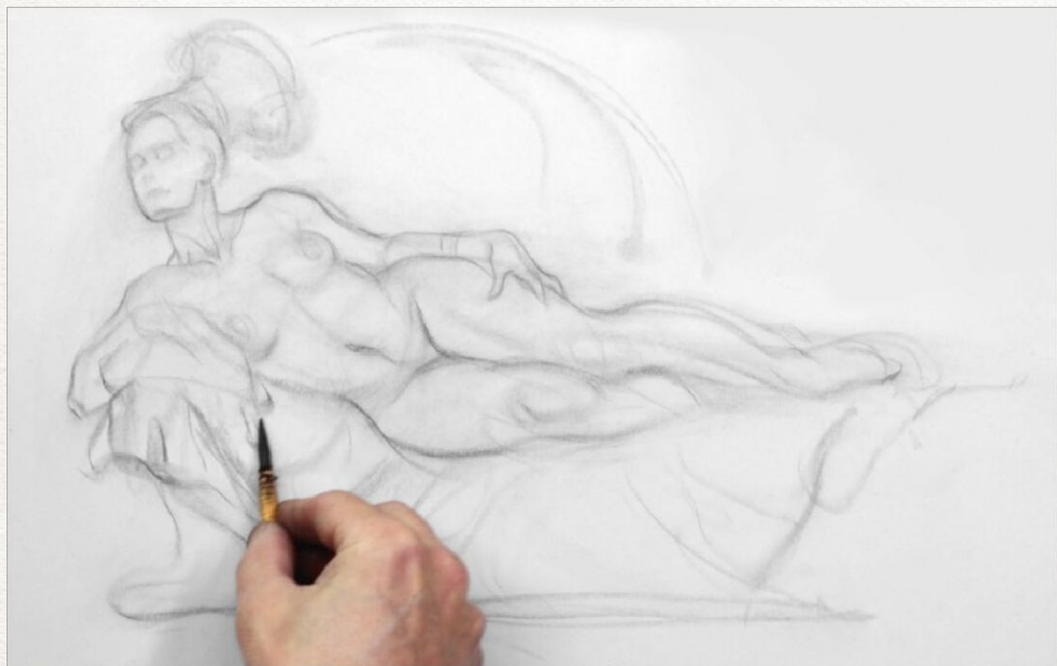
6 *A better understanding*

The main difference between the preliminary sketch and the working sketch is that with the preliminary sketch I'm looking more to understand the movement and gesture of the model. I exaggerate forms in order to understand better: I over-box the hips and put more feminine flow into the arms and legs.



7 *Avoiding a world of confusion*

You might ask why would I draw the same pose twice. Isn't that a waste of time? The answer is no. To extrapolate the gestural rhythm and flow of the figure while also creating a working drawing is unnecessary multitasking, and multitasking for me is a world of confusion.



8 *The subconscious art engine*

By this point I believe The Martian Queen could be a real person. I understand the way she moves and behaves, but the bonus to this half hour of exploration is the muscle memory embedded in my hand, and the memory of the forms inside my subconscious art engine.



9 *The working drawing*

With my gestural hand fluid, and my subconscious art engine engaged, I lay in the working drawing. The reason it's called a working drawing is this drawing contains the line-work that will go under the finished oil painting. I use a 9B woodless graphite pencil on tracing paper, drawing a reverse image which I'll flip later for transfer.



10 *Gesture is key*

With the big and small shapes in place I keep my arm at a distance from the art to ensure I stay focused on the big overall gesture, from the sweeping torso, down into the hips, and on through to the flowing drapery. Gesture is key when it comes to the female figure.



11 *Combining the elements*

For the first time I turn my full attention and focus to the queen's face. Up until this point it's all been about the flow and gesture - now it's also about the inner workings of the mind. Mix those elements together and we have a powerful portrait of a Martian queen. I outline background ideas too, such as a large moon.



12 *Long curves of the drapery*

I get away from detail for a while and regain the flow by working on to bigger elements. Detail can severely disrupt the overall energy of the drawing if we're in there for too long, so I go back and forth while echoing the curves of the moon's craters with the long curves of the drapery. This sense of rhythm will unify the scene.



13 Working in harmony

The holistic nature of working on the background and the figure at the same time is working its unique magic. I design the jewellery and the pattern on the drapery to work in harmony, which creates the otherworldliness required to make this Martian queen and her environment authentic and believable.



14 Regal touches to the figure

I'm getting a feel for the flesh now in preparation for the paint. For the final regal touches I return to the face and hands and raise the eye make up, eyebrows and cheek bones. It all looks good. The final test will be to flip the drawing and see what needs tweaked with a fresh eye in play.



15 Making corrections and preparing for the painting stage

The reversed drawing reveals the drapery was hung too low on the leg, which I easily correct. This is one of the benefits from drawing in reverse. All I need to do now is burnish the drawing down onto the canvas with a big soup spoon and get started on the painting. ●

First Impressions

✧ Erik Krenz ✧

Discover how nature has inspired this US-based artist



Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
I grew up in Minneapolis,

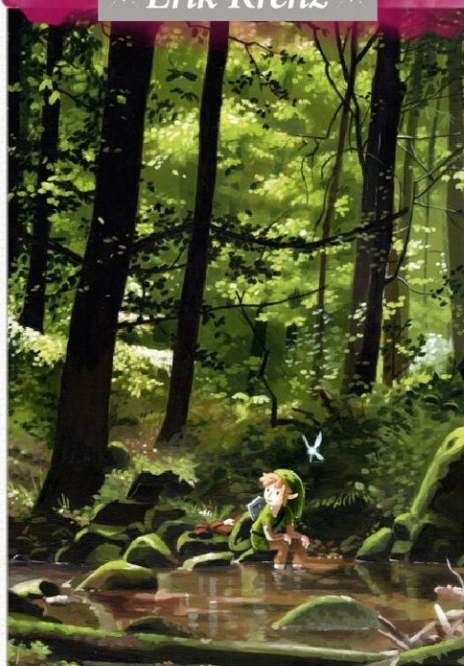
Minnesota. It was a lovely place to have my childhood, but I can't say confidently that where I grew up had much influence on my art. There is a region, though, in Minnesota that's called The North Woods, and I'm certain that place had a deep and lasting impact on me and my art. Truly a beautiful and wondrous location.

What, outside of art, has most influenced your work?

I think the easy answer is nature. I love looking at it, and I love being in it. It honestly consumes me. But I've also had a love for architecture since I was a kid. I'm certain that my love for buildings has helped with how I compose and construct a painting.

Is there a painting that you saw in your formative years that changed everything? What was it?

I was absolutely obsessed with Jan Van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait. It's hard to say why exactly I was so captivated, but I'm sure it partially had to do with the amount of



LINK

This piece is 10 years old, but shows the beginnings of Erik's paired-back realism.

compulsive detail the painting had. I couldn't believe such a thing was possible. Still can't.

Tell us about your first paid commission, and does it stand as a representation of your talent?

“I want nothing more than to live in a cottage in the English countryside”

My first commission was for a brochure on renewable energy. I hated the concepts I came up with, and I hated how they were executed. I developed a style in college that years later I realised didn't represent my inner self. That first commission was the start of a long journey to find a truer and more accurate style.

DAPPER FOX

"My absolute favourite piece I've ever done," says Erik Krenz.

What's the last piece that you finished? How do the two differ?
The last painting I finished was a piece called Pesta Waits for a gallery show here in Minneapolis. Frankly, it's like night and day. My work in the beginning was very geometric and kinda cartoony. My work now is realistic and painterly. I'm much happier with my style now.

Is making a living as an artist all you thought it would be?

I work full time for a company that specialises in curating exhibits for museums and zoos where I help assist as a sculptor and painter. Having that steady cheque has allowed me to choose projects on the side that I feel passionate about. It hasn't always been easy, but I feel very content with my artistic career.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?

I took such a circuitous path that it's hard to say how I'd get here any other way than how I did, but I'd tell myself to be more confident.

How has the industry changed for good since you've been a part of it?

I would certainly consider social media a double-edged sword, but it has allowed people from all over the world to see my work who otherwise may never have. When I started, it was still mostly blogs. The ability to instantly share art changed everything.

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?

My painting called Dapper Fox. I want nothing more than to live in a cottage in the English countryside.

What's your next step in art or life?

I want to focus on my own work. I've had a few ideas for a series of paintings on the back-burner for years, and I'd like to get to them before it's too late.

You can follow Erik and order his art prints at erikkrenzprints.squarespace.com.



FREE ARTBOOK

НОВЫЙ АДРЕС КУЛЬТОВОГО СООБЩЕСТВА



Все артбуки даром! Лучшая и самая большая коллекция! Ежедневное обновление!

Легко смотреть и всё можно скачать! Ищи архив здесь: [VK.COM/FREEARTBOOK](https://vk.com/freeartbook)

ALL ARTBOOKS FOR FREE! THE BEST AND BIGGEST COLLECTION! DAILY UPDATE!

EASY TO LOOK AT AND EVERYTHING CAN BE DOWNLOADED! SEARCH THE ARCHIVE HERE: [VK.COM/FREEARTBOOK](https://vk.com/freeartbook)

